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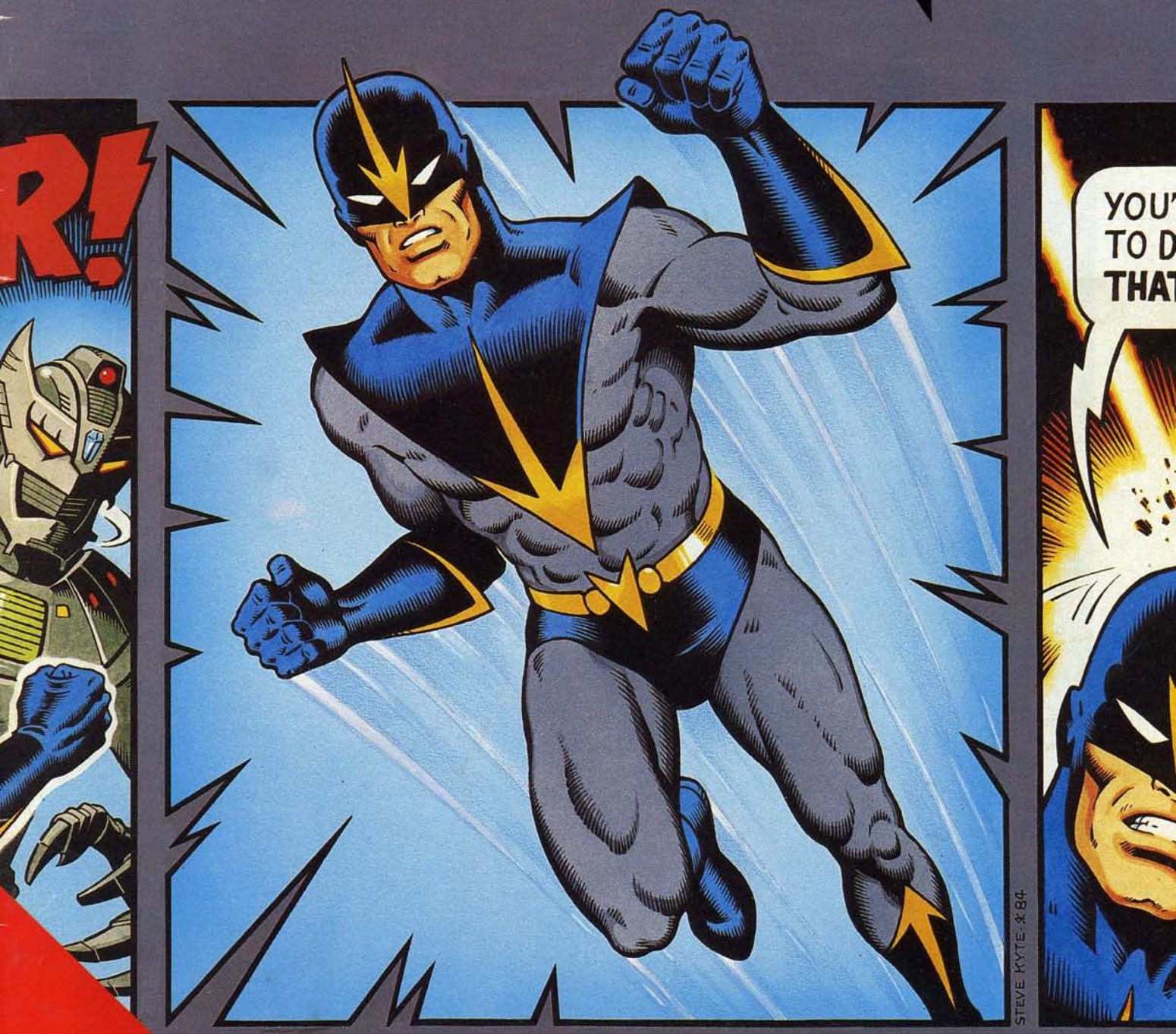

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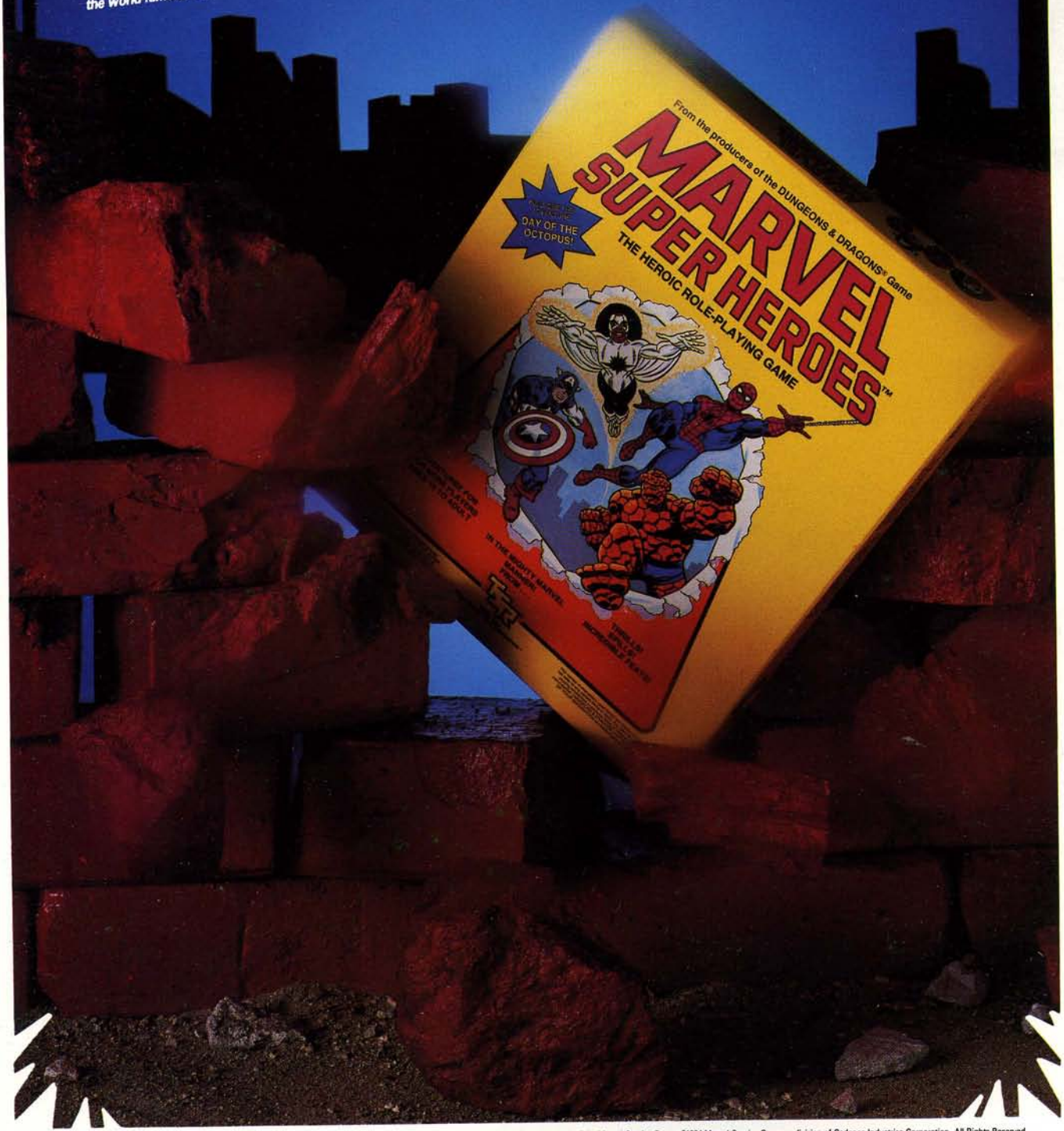

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Editorial

The arrival of the **MARVEL SUPERHEROES** game must be one of the most important events in gaming in the last year — and possibly of next year too! Judging from the interest shown in the sample that was on show at **Games Day** in September, it will be a huge success.

Many of you have noticed the increasing trend towards 'tie-ins' in gaming; a process whereby new games are based on existing book or cinema properties. In the last year we have had **CONAN** modules for the AD&D game; the **INDIANA JONES** rpg; and **MARVEL SUPERHEROES**. This process seems to be the result of the mass market acceptance that role-playing has achieved; when you think of the sudden interest that the British paperback publishers have shown in gaming, you see how people outside of gaming have become aware of its potential.

TSR is coming up to its 10th anniversary, and things have doubtless changed a great deal over that decade. One thing you can all be sure of — the **DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®** game has not been forgotten in the midst of all this activity, and IMAGINE magazine will remain the place to find out what's going on.

Merry Xmas!
Paul Cockburn

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An Examination of the World of Superheroes and Superhero Roleplaying

by Nige Squires

'Comics? They're just for kids — everyone knows that.'

This is the typical response from the man in the street, reflecting the general attitude towards any and all publications that resemble the traditional comic. And it is just as likely to be the response if the word 'comics' is replaced by 'games'. The public at large will always have this set point of view about comics, I believe, but roleplayers should be more sympathetic towards this form of escapism. Moreover, you could find a great deal of enjoyment from playing games that are based on, and drawn from, the stories presented in comics and the growth in this sector of the roleplaying industry shows that many people are finding this to be true.

The particular field that I am going to examine is that of the Superhero, though comics contain other milieux that lend themselves to rpgs, such as Science Fiction. The bulk of Superhero source material comes from the USA; everyone should have a good idea of what the traditional American 'comic-book' is like. Therefore some things need not be explained and I will assume a basic knowledge of what a comic-book is. Two main topics will be covered — first, I will present an overview of Superhero comics; second, I will look at the implications of joining the Superhero theme to rpgs.

Comic-books have their origins back in the last century, but the Superhero comic was born in 1938. In June of that year a publishing company, 'Detective Comics, Inc', brought out **Action Comics #1**, which featured **Superman** in his first appearance. The Man of Steel was very different from any other character yet presented in a comic-book. The creators of Superman, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, had produced something unique, but perhaps more importantly, the character was immediately successful in commercial terms. The result of this was that Detective Comics, Inc (also known as 'DC' or National Periodical Publications) started to produce similar kinds of characters. They were not without their imitators, either. In particular, Timely Publications, which was formed in 1939, created several notable characters, the first of which was the **Sub-Mariner**.

Among other early Superheroes were **Batman**, the **Human Torch**, **Captain Marvel**, **Wonder Woman**, and **Captain America**. All of these, except Captain Marvel, were the creations of either DC or Timely. Today, though Timely are now called Marvel Comics, these two publishers still account for the vast majority of Superheroes found in comics. Indeed, until recently DC and Marvel had an almost exclusive monopoly on the genre.

Since 1981, however, many smaller comic publishers have sprung up; these are termed Independents in the comics world. Individually they present no threat to the 'big two', but collectively they represent a significant group that cannot be ignored. Much of the output from the Independents is non-Superhero material, though, so little mention will be made of them here.

Let us examine the development of Superheroes in a bit more detail. There are broadly three periods in comic-book history;

1. The Golden Age, which began in 1938 and finished around 1950.
2. A period of recession, a Dark Age if you like, in the fifties.
3. The Silver Age, which began in 1961 and has no defined end as yet.

The Golden Age is a fascinating period, little documented, but studied by many people. All the ins and outs are a little beyond this article, but I would like to point out a few key events.

Superman was a true Superhero. His powers, even his origin, were of superhuman (or extrahuman, possibly) nature. His abilities were beyond the 'Human'. The Sub-Mariner too was superhuman, if slightly more Earthly in origin. Then, in May 1939 DC published a story in #27 of **Detective Comics** which introduced a non-superpowered hero, Batman. This character shared the costumed element of being a 'hero' with Superman et al, and yet had much more in common with the pulp heroes of the thirties, such as the **Shadow** and **Doc Savage**, who had no special powers. Batman was a halfway house between the two kinds of hero and represents a group of 'human' Superheroes which today includes such characters as **Moon Knight** and Captain America. The vulnerability of these heroes means that they often rely on their knowledge and intelligence in order to survive and overcome their foes. This results in deeper characterization and perhaps a better choice for roleplaying than the type who belongs to the megapowerful/immortal/invulnerable category.

But I'm jumping ahead of myself. Batman was the first basically human Superhero. Later his strip in Detective Comics introduced another common element of superhero comics, when in #38, **Robin** the Boy Wonder became Batman's protegé and sidekick. This idea was copied many times afterwards in other comics. The Human Torch picked up Toro, and Captain America took on Bucky Barnes, to name but two examples. DC provided another innovation later on in 1940 when they assembled several Superheroes together in one story; two issues later **All Star Comics** contained the **Justice Society of America**, a group formed out of these heroes. Again, this idea was used on numerous occasions afterwards, and there are not many heroes of modern times who have not

been at some point associated with a team of fellow heroes. The importance of the Superhero group to role playing will be discussed later on.

The Golden Age was followed by a period in the fifties when Superheroes were largely supplanted by Horror stories in comics, notably the line produced by 'EC'. Superhero comics would return with a bang in the early sixties, but the Silver Age was heralded by the resurrection of several DC superheroes and comic-book titles. This was initiated in 1956 by the appearance of the **Flash** in **Showcase #4**. Later on the Flash would spark off the complicated system of multiple Earths that the DC universe consists of. I shall be mentioning this again further on.

The Silver Age commenced with the publication of the **Fantastic Four #1**. In November 1961. Stan Lee, a veteran of the comics industry, had wanted to produce a different kind of comic-book featuring Superheroes in a soap opera style. He collaborated with another experienced craftsman of the industry, Jack Kirby, and created a Superteam that had members with visible lives outside of fighting baddies. Furthermore the four heroes bickered and fought among themselves. Such characterisation as portrayed in Marvel Comics' Fantastic Four, and later on in other titles like **Spiderman**, had never existed in any other company's comics. Previously, even continuity had been haphazard, and most stories were contained in a single issue. Marvel introduced superior continuity, with multi-part stories and 'cross-overs' between different comics. Just as DC had changed the direction of comic-books with **Action Comics #1**, Marvel did the same with **FF #1**. Following this success, the company that had been called Timely in the Golden Age revived some of its heroes from that period, created some fresh, and blended them all with various supporting characters to form the Marvel universe.

There are two points to make from this. First, the comic buying public loved it all and Marvel rapidly overtook DC as the foremost comic-book company; a position they still hold twenty years on. Second, roleplayers have a rich source to draw from, not only in reference to Marvel's comics, but also to the other companies who followed their lead.

The later history of the Silver Age is well recorded but mention of a few events may serve to bring out some important points.

In the year following FF #1's launch, Stan Lee, working with artist Steve Ditko this time, created Spiderman. Here was a Superhero with characterization, but more than that, here was a hero with problems! The aforementioned soap opera element was deeply embedded in this comic-book from the word go, and this is probably the largest factor that contributes to the popularity of the character and the titles he appears in. Again, the reservoir of useful material for role players is overflowing, looking at just this one Superhero.

The **X-Men** were premiered in 1963, and they gave us a new kind of hero origin. Not alien like Superman, nor the product of some scientific experiment that went astray, the X-Men were born with latent powers resulting from mutations in their genes. Today, in the world of comics at least, mutants are very prominent and much discussed. I would also guess that most roleplayers would immediately think of the X-Men as the Superheroes they might roleplay. The X-Men in their current incarnation provide Marvel with the industry's biggest selling title, though at one stage the title was discontinued.

In 1981 the first Independent comic publisher, Pacific Comics, began publishing comics that differed from Marvel's and DC's in certain respects. These new comic-books were sold only through subscription or in specialist comic shops. They were generally of higher physical quality, being printed on better paper, but consequently more expensive. Lastly, these comics were under the creative control of the writers and artists more than ever before; the creators retained all the copyrights to the material and received royalties from sales. Since the first of these comics was published a plethora of companies has arisen and a quite staggering amount of material is now available. Other Independent comic publishers, aside from Pacific, include First, Eclipse, Americomics, and even a British one, IPC, who publish **Judge Dredd**.

Moving away from the history and development of Superhero comics now, I would like to discuss the range of characters and stories present in the field, and how these can be used directly or indirectly in application to Superhero rpgs. I hope that with pertinent examples I can adequately convey the potential that exists for roleplayers.

The idea of borrowing from Superhero comics to provide an alternative to the usual fantasy or science fiction setting for roleplaying is not new. **Superhero 2044** was around when I first entered the hobby five years ago. However, it has taken some time for SHrpgs to develop into an advanced state, as was the case with Frpgs in the seventies. Superhero games are more closely linked with their source material in other media than are other types of game, and as such follow the spirit of comic-books fairly rigidly. A key difference between Fantasy/SF rpgs and the Superhero variety is that the former are open ended, while the latter are more directional in intent, mimicking the style of comic-book plotlines. As will be seen, this has its pros and cons, but nevertheless provides a relatively unexplored alternative approach to roleplaying.

Any overview of the field of Superheroes in comics must rely on some form of classification of Superheroes — or of supervillains for that matter. There are two main groups of 'super-powered' characters:

1. Those with little or no superhuman power
2. Those with abilities truly beyond human achievement.

Equally valid analyses of Superbeings in comic-books might be based upon origin, race, sex, or even the company that publishes the character. For the moment, let's stick to my first method.

Most human-level characters will either be found employing a gimmick of some description, or be fairly acrobatic. Typical gimmicks for a superhero to use would be a bow and arrow, a shield or a device that discharges electricity (though in truth there is no such thing as a typical gimmick). Marvel's Captain America uses a shield, for example, in combination with his acrobatic skills, and extensive adventuring and combat experience. The bow and arrow gimmick occurs at least twice in comics, being employed by DC's **Green Arrow** and Marvel's **Hawkeye**. The question of who copied whom may be irrelevent as it is probable that both drew on some obscure Golden Age character. This is often the case where similarities occur. One point about gimmicks in game terms is that they help to establish individuality for a player character, and even provide the basis for adventures — as Captain Aborigine goes off to try to get his boomerang imbued with mystic power....

Other characters worth a mention in the human-level class are Moon Knight, Batman, Robin, and **Daredevil**. The various devices and gimmicks that Batman uses are well known from the TV series, albeit slightly exaggerated. Daredevil could be thought of as superhuman as he possesses a radar sense, but I think he belongs in the human class as he has much in common with those characters.

Many of these less powerful heroes have intriguing personality traits that enhance what is otherwise, perhaps, a slightly dull appeal. Batman is driven by a sense of mission; it is his purpose to fight the underworld of criminals and villains. Captain America tries to be a symbol of certain aspects of his country, though just exactly which ones even he sometimes can't say.

Characters with superpowers make up the bulk of comic-book heroes and villains. The range of raw power and the diversity of abilities within the latter group is enormous. One might think, therefore, that every character would be totally unique. However, this is not quite true, as there are some common blends of powers that enable one to conveniently group various characters together. One of the most basic types of superhuman often found is the 'behemoth' with vast strength. The best example is the **Hulk**, one of Marvel's oldest and most popular heroes. The Hulk is a Jekyll-and-Hyde creature, unintelligent and awesomely strong in his Hulk form, in contrast to the exceptionally intelligent but puny Dr Banner who turns into the Hulk when excited. A nice twist to this is that the more excited or angry the Hulk gets, the stronger he gets.

Unfortunately, such a character is very hard to play and manage in an rpg. Other, more playable, heroes in this category would be the **Thing** of the FF or **Blok** of the Legion of Superheroes.

Physical strength is one of the most frequently encountered superpowers. For roleplaying the upper end of the range is hard to handle; characters that can lift mountains need special treatment! Ways can be found of neutralizing great strength of course, but it requires competent GMing and is always a relief of the symptoms, not a 'cure'. GMs of Frpgs often have similar problems with high level magic users, so the 'therapy' perhaps should be the exclusion of very powerful characters from all rpgs.

Physical strength often goes hand in hand with some degree of resistance, toughness, or invulnerability. Superman is at the extreme here, being vulnerable to a single substance; this single weakness is a common device in the character's stories and would make an interesting aspect of a game, but unfortunately Superman is quite unsuitable for roleplaying because he is far too powerful. There are several heroes in comic-books with manageable physical qualities, luckily.

Another common power is the energy blast. This comes in several forms, and can be one of several energy-manipulative skills that a hero has. First Comics' **E-Man** is made of energy itself and he can achieve almost anything. It has to be said, though, that this particular strip is fairly humorous and so perhaps is not a very good example. The touches of humour, incidently, could provide inspiration for the odd light-hearted moment in a game, though such things are usually spontaneous and not premeditated.

Two types of powers present in Superheroes also lend themselves to other areas of role playing: psionics and magic. Psionics fit in well with SF games, and magic with Fantasy rpgs. In the fictional world of Superheroes, I feel that psionics fit in more easily than do mystical powers, but there are several good examples of both, and a perusal of a couple of titles may provide inspiration not only for Superhero gaming, but also for SF/Frpgs, too. **Dr Strange**, published by Marvel, contains a great deal of useful source material connected with both psionic and magic abilities. The **New Teen Titans** from DC is generally an excellent comic to have a look at, but in particular several of their stories have featured psionics or magic, and one of the teams members (**Raven**) is a mystic.

There are too many miscellaneous powers to mention, but to whet your appetites here are a brief few. DC's **Flask** can move with super speed, Marvel's **Nightcrawler** can teleport, DC's **Plastic Man** can change his shape into virtually anything, and Pacific's **Missing Man** can make most of his body vanish completely.

There are many kinds of Superheroes, then, but what about plotlines and devices present in the comics, and other characteristics of heroes and villains? Most of the good comic-book writers move from company to company or are freelance anyway. Therefore the good plot elements and ideas have been distributed among the various publishers more or less equally, at least regarding the output of the last decade or two. As a source for GMs, comic-books are cheaper than commercial modules, so the advice is to grab a handful because they will provide much of what you need to run a SHrpg.

An easily recognisable plot feature in comic-books is the secret identity. Heroes, and occasionally villains, hide their true identities from the general public for

Superman is unsuitable for roleplaying because he is far too powerful... Many of the less-powerful heroes are enhanced by intriguing idiosyncracies

various reasons. A hero may do it to protect friends and relatives from enemies, or to avoid constant invasions of privacy. Villains may do it so that they can fade into the background when the authorities are nearby. There are examples of heroes having their secret identities revealed in comic books. Spiderman has been unmasked and revealed as Peter Parker more than once. On each occasion the identity has been restored to its unknown state by some contrived reversal and explanation. Such is the stuff of comic-books of course! No matter that the secret ID plot is now a bit clichéd. Half the fun is from picking holes in the explanation, but for rpgs things have to be considerably tighter, so be careful when using this theme. Several avenues could be explored by a GM, and the players could be kept on their toes, having to constantly worry about maintaining their secret IDs. Can they be sure there wasn't someone else on that roof top where they changed? And if there was, was it a member of the public, a fellow hero, or worst of all, a villain?

The only time any similar plotline can arise in other types of roleplaying game as a matter of course, is when an Assassin or Spy is being run by a player. SHrpgs therefore provide the opportunity for GMs to fully explore this aspect of roleplaying. Players too might find the possibilities of playing such a dual role interesting. How different might a character be when not wearing a costume? At times Spiderman has evinced remarkable differences.

The easy way out of the secret ID problem is to go public. The Fantastic Four did this almost from the very start. This matters little to the Thing, since his real identity is seen so rarely, and this may be true for a player character who spends most of his or her time in a transformed state.

Interaction of superheroes, in either identity, with supporting characters is another crucial element in modern comic-books. The precedent was set on day one, when **Lois Lane** made an appearance with Superman in Action Comics #1. Eventually this character had her own strip, as did another of Superman's supporting characters, **Jimmy Olsen**. These normal humans (typically) provide the potential GM with really quite fascinating Non Player Characters. They allow opportunities to roleplay, and can be used as tools to direct players' actions. Study of a few comics would produce many ideas for a GM to use. Titles notable for large casts of supporting characters include Superman, Spiderman, and the Fantastic Four. In the FF's case the cast has at least two important cosmic entities among its number!

If anything is more clichéd than the previously mentioned secret ID plot element, then it is surely the so-called deathtrap. In any episodic medium this tool is an obvious way of keeping the audience eager for the next instalment. Care should be taken not to use the deathtrap too often in rpgs for two reasons; it will become hackneyed in a short time, and the death rate will become unacceptable. Deaths of heroes in comics are very rare, and often villains return from seemingly inescapable doom. In a SHrpg, characters are expected to die more frequently than their comic-book counterparts, but nevertheless they should not die very often. Some role-players stick to the spirit of comic stories very closely, making death as rare as in the stories. In these cases a lot of manipulation (or fudging) is required by the GM, not to mention a high degree of co-operation by the players. These groups are effectively acting out a storyline together, rather than playing it out. At the extreme they might 'play' an actual comic-book story, following it detail for detail.

In games where more actual play is involved, death will occur every once in a while, though. Deathtraps are frequently lethal, so over-use is a bad mistake on the GM's part. A deathtrap, as seen in comic-books, is deadly, and escapable by a single cryptic method. The players of rpgs are not all as devious as comic-book writers, so they will often fail to solve the puzzle in time. GMs please take note of this, as I think it is the most poorly handled aspect of SHrpgs. GMs who have lacked the foresight to realise what will happen are often left with only two options: kill the character(s) or fabricate some highly unsatisfactory explanation for an escape. I also warn against some of the advice I've often seen in magazines. Very often the writers apparently relish pointing to books of logic puzzles for problems to set players. Most of the time these puzzles would be unsuitable due to their relative difficulty.

Contemporary comics have another widespread story feature: the team-up. The best example of a comic that features this element is **Marvel Team-Up**, which nearly always stars Spiderman and another hero. Team-ups sometimes last more than one issue and occur as cross-overs. The simplest formula for a team-up is as follows. A villain dupes two heroes into fighting each other; the heroes eventually talk instead of fight; the heroes team up and go after the villain. The details are often superfluous. Limited use could be made of the team-up in SHrpgs, mainly for GMs with only one or two players. However, knowing what role-players can be like, it may not be wise to let heroes fight each other, as they could fight to the death. In comics, some Superhero fights have become almost annual events, for instance the Thing vs the Hulk, but death never occurs in any fight.

The majority of roleplayers choose Superheroes over supervillains as characters. The baddies are perhaps equated with the monsters of Frpgs and considered as bashing fodder in a similar way. I do feel it is worth briefly discussing villains as player characters, however. In comics there are several outstanding villains, none more so than Marvel's **Doctor Doom**. He is a superb model of a villain that a skilful role player could get to grips with. He has a complex personality, being insane, megalomaniacal, jealous, evil

and unscrupulous, yet he is also caring of his people, honourable, and a cultured genius who appreciates the arts. 'Inconsistent writing'? Who said that? Well, maybe, but aren't we all multi-faceted? Doc Doom is a classy supervillain. Any of his appearances will supply a roleplayer with a good idea or two about how to be a quality villain. His schemes to rule the world and his comebacks from death are extremely numerous.

Doc Doom is a classy Supervillain — any of his appearances will supply a roleplayer with good ideas about how to be a quality villain.

There is one negative factor in playing a supervillain, however. Often they are portrayed as being somewhat self-destructive. One does not have to simulate comic-books exactly, of course, but it is undeniably a built-in element of being a villain. The natural way of things is that the self-destructive villains are always beaten by the heroes. Good triumphs over evil. It is sometimes hard to accept that your character is going to meet his or her end, and it is harder still to play it that way.

In the sixties Marvel introduced a new and different type of character; the anti-hero. As far as roleplayers are concerned the anti-hero represents a kind of cross between a hero and a villain. The anti-hero lacks the touch of madness that invariably causes a villain's demise, but at the same time goes his or her own way, often at odds with society, and bound only by a personal code of conduct. The Sub-Mariner, who was reintroduced at the beginning of the Silver Age, is an anti-hero. He has attacked mankind more than once, but he has also acted on behalf of the human race. While he is the sovereign of his people, in the world of humans he is something of an outcast. This kind of role is a more appealing one for roleplayers than that of a true villain, and certainly warrants investigation. Be sure to develop a sound premise for the status of an anti-hero — such a character should have a good reason for going his or her own way in life. Try and develop some sort of moral code and set of goals for the character.

Superheroines deserve a brief mention as another option for player character choice. Wonder Woman was the first superheroine. Today there are several other noteworthy females such as the **Invisible Girl**, who as one of the Fantastic Four was the first Silver Age heroine. Although several modern Superheroines have touches of unoriginality about them, and some are duplicates of existing male characters, for instance **Wonder Girl** and **She-Hulk**, and some are a bit stereotyped, they can provide a quite reasonable basis for roleplaying. Good models include **Storm** of the X-Men, **Starfire** of the New Teen Titans, and Daredevil's sometime companion the **Black Widow**.

The natural way of playing rpgs is in a group. In SF or Fantasy games there can be several justifications for characters to band together. In Superhero rpgs there are also several reasons for the existence of groups of characters.

Drawing from comics for reasons, superteams exist formally or informally due to government authorisation (the **Avengers**), friendship (the New Teen Titans), employment (the **DN Agents**), or other factors. In comic-books there are well over a dozen different superteams, so there is a lot of reference material for roleplayers to use.

In general superteams, and hence groups of Superhero characters in rpgs, meet greater foes and challenges than single heroes do. The actual stories are often multi-part, with cliffhanger endings linking the episodes. This situation lends itself well to campaigns and long adventures, where the players can be left wanting more at the and of each session, meeting possibly tougher opponents or more difficult challenges each time.

The final area I want to cover before concluding is the campaign background. The GM must first decide on the kind of world in which the players will live. Unlike SF/Frpgs the setting is vaguely contemporary, so it is possible for the game world to be based on the real world. The degree to which this is done can range from loose modelling with a lot of fictitious places, people and events, up to a very close correspondence with actual home towns and players being involved in the gameworld. In this situation a large amount of background knowledge is already held by the players which saves time and effort, allowing more actual play. The one possible disadvantage of this is that the challenge of roleplaying a completely different personality may be removed if the players are used as the characters' alter egos.

A GM may wish to develop some sort of cosmic framework for a campaign as well. The examples to draw upon in the comic world are, for once, limited; either the DC Universe or the Marvel Universe. The DC Universe is an excellent example, however, of how not to develop a campaign universe. Shortly after the Flash was revived in the '50s, one story in the comic-book had the hero transported by vibrating in a special way to the world of the 'comic-book' Flash that had inspired the Flash himself. Confused? It gets worse. Of course the Flash (the 'real' one) knew all about the comic-book Flash, including his secret identity, because he had read the stories in the comics. This all gave rise to the 'Earth-1/Earth-2' continuum of universes that is present in DC comics. The one benefit of this is that it did help to straighten out the continuity between the Golden Age stories and the Silver Age ones, for instance explaining Batman's long career. The Golden Age heroes live on Earth-2. There are still gaping holes in the continuity, but hopefully these will be tied up when DC publish their twelve issue series **DC Universe: Crisis on Infinite Earths** next year which promises to resolve the situation for good.

Moral: avoid jumping around with the period of the campaign setting, never include comics within the game as anything other than 'fiction', and don't get carried away with alternate universes and time paradoxes.

The Marvel universe is far more reasonable. It will give you some good ideas about other dimensions, cosmic beings, gods, and acceptable time manipulation. In particular **Thor** and Doctor Strange are good references.

In summary then, the field of Superhero roleplaying presents an exciting alternative to the commonly encountered Fantasy and Science Fiction themes. While based in a 20th Century world, players can be placed into almost any environment and given countless challenges. The roles available are varied and the depth of personality and motivation is limited only by the players' skill and imagination. GMs and players have a truly vast reference library of source material.

The SHrpg GM must be judicious, however. Any ideas borrowed from comics must be suitable for a game, which involves players writing their own scripts and not always acting as expected. Be flexible, and don't repeat plot devices too often or they will become pass. Players should use comic-book characters as models, but not copy every aspect. Consistent behaviour patterns and personalities should be developed according to the setting, aims of the character, and interaction with other player and non-player characters.

I have recommended several comic-book titles in this article, but there are several generally useful ones I wish to refer you to now: from your local newsagent Tales of the New Teen Titans, Tales of the Legion of Superheroes, the X-Men, the Fantastic Four, Marvel Superheroes' Secret Wars; and from specialist comics shops (some of which also sell games) Marvel Fanfare, Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe. This latter title is a must, because it gives details of all the significant Marvel characters; statistics, origins, equipment, the lot. Buy as many as you can carry.

Nige Squires

My thanks to Simon Burley, Martin Lock, and Paul Cockburn for their comments in the early stages of this article.

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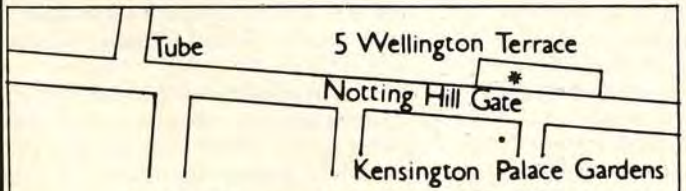

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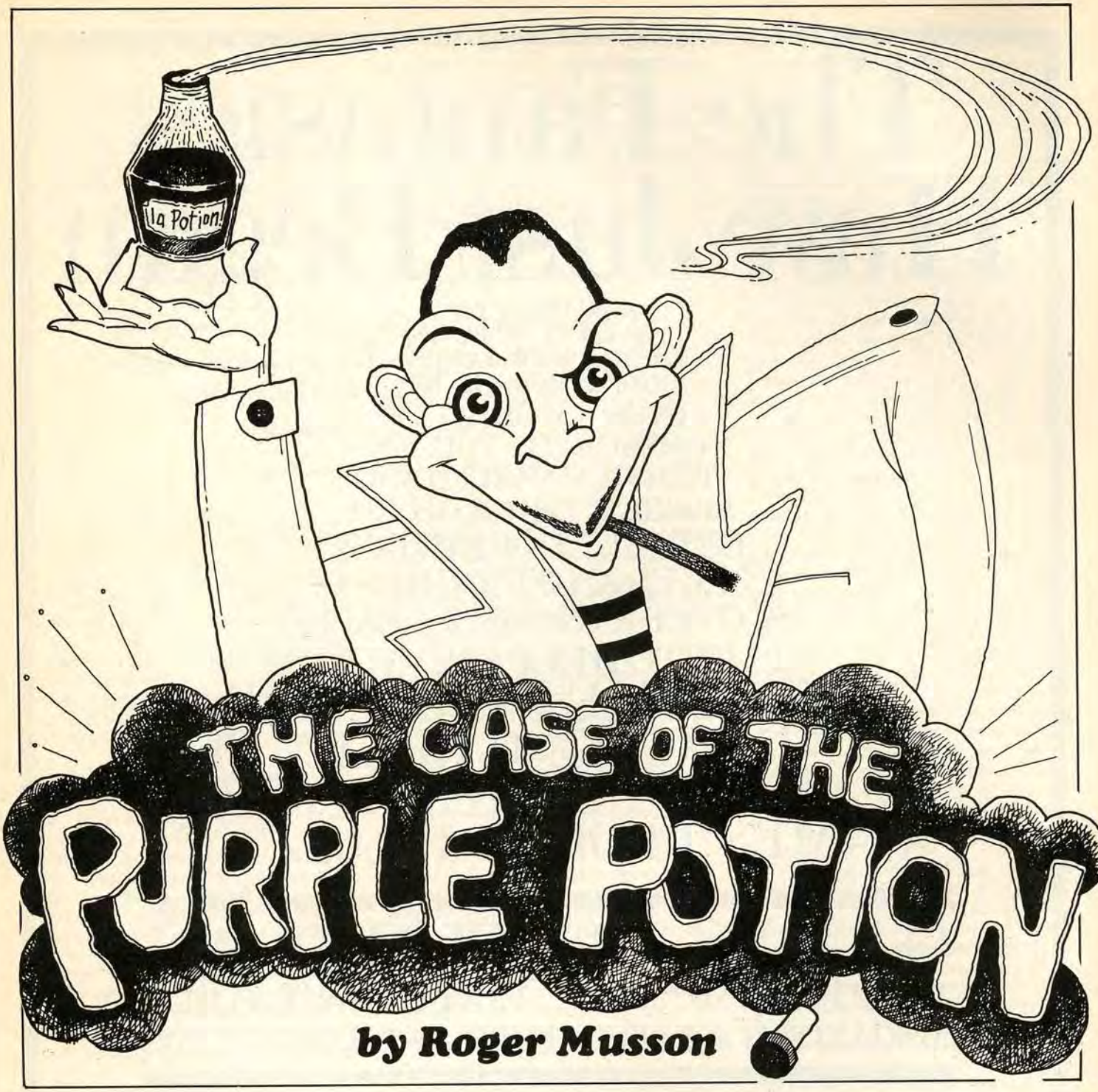


Down the chute they went, and landed with a 'whumph' on the conveniently placed pile of straw.

'No hit points lost, anybody, I hope?' MacPherson enquired solicitously. The highest level member of the party, and the proud possessor of a **sword +1** to boot, he naturally regarded himself as the party's leader and father figure. But much good had his protective eye done this time; the floor had slid away before they could reach the door, and now, here they were, lost somewhere in the furthermost reaches of level 3c.

Slowly the members of the party got up and dusted themselves down. Evans the Magician straightened his robes, sneezed affectedly, and complained that the straw gave him hay fever. The party's Thief, who insisted on being called the Pink Ocelot, had spilt the bag of silver pieces he was carrying, and rummaged around in the straw trying to find them all. In doing so, he bumped into Ebenezer the Cleric who was struggling to get to his feet in his heavy plate mail, and they both went down in a heap and a clatter of armour. The least bruised member of the party was the Thief-acrobat, perhaps because he was used to falling. *'Sacre bleu,'* he muttered, for he was French. As he also plied his acrobat skills as a tumbler in a travelling circus (when not adventuring) he called himself Duralex.

Eventually they were all up, the torch re-lit, and they began to take stock of their surroundings. The room was small and gloomy, with dank stone walls, and bare of any contents save the pile of straw on which the party had landed.

'We're trapped' moaned the Cleric.

'Not yet' replied MacPherson in a confident voice; 'I sense a secret door.'

'You can't,' wailed Ebenezer, 'you're not an Elf.'

'You muddle-headed Ochre Jelly of a Cleric, there's more than one way to detect secret doors. There must be one, or how would the Dungeon designers get in to put the straw down?' Actually MacPherson could think of several ways, but he preferred not to dwell on the matter.

The Pink Ocelot, however, was already turning words into action, and was diligently searching the opposite wall.

'I think I've found something' he called out.

'Excellent' cried the Fightingman, and went over to examine the narrow crack in the wall the Thief had discovered. It was definitely a secret door. 'Listen at it' he said. Everyone held their breath as the Thief listened.

'I hear no sound at all' he announced.

'It must be Undead' the Cleric cried. 'They make no sound at all.'

'There's one sure way to find out' said Evans, 'now, where's my Wand of Undead Detection?

The party looked on dubiously as the Magician fished out a short bit of wood. They had heard this one before, and didn't believe a word of it. Evans pointed the wand at the secret door and appeared to concentrate deeply.

'Quite likely Undead,' he announced at last, 'Quite likely.'

'I hope so,' said the Cleric, 'I feel like turning something.'

'I wish you'd turn *into* something,' muttered Duralex.

By this time, MacPherson, putting his whole weight against the secret door, had managed to push it open. Cautious and quiet, the party slipped through into the next room. They found themselves emerging into what looked like a prison cell, the far wall being mostly occupied by iron bars, beyond which were another set of bars, and beyond them a corridor could be seen, and even better, stairs up. But between the two sets of bars were horrible green skeletal monsters.

'Ghouls!' gasped MacPherson.

'Told you so' muttered Evans.

'Last time you said you detected Undead it turned out to be Yellow Mould,' carped Ebenezer. 'We nearly got asphixiated.'

'It was Undead Yellow Mould' replied Evans, in a hurt tone.

The Thief, meanwhile, was examining the padlock on the bars, going as close as he dared.

'Does it open?' asked the party's leader.

'Should be no bother to pick this lock,' came the reply, 'but what are we going to do about those horrors? If I open the bars they'll come rushing in.' Indeed, the Ghouls looked as if they would sorely like to do just that.

'Cleric, there's a bit of turning needed.'

'Very well, hand me a twenty-sider.'

Ebenezer crouched down and carefully threw the die on the floor.

'Three,' he said.

'Rubbish' cried the Thief angrily, and kicked the die into a corner of the room. 'Do it properly.'

So Ebenezer waved his wooden cross a bit at the Ghouls, and said a few stumbling prayers, and very little happened.

'Ruddy first level Cleric' muttered the Thief. 'We're trapped.'

'Now, now' said MacPherson, trying to sound as jolly as he could. 'Let's not despair. I've been in worse problems than this. Did I ever tell you about the time I went adventuring in a South African dungeon?'

'Yes,' said Ebenezer wearily.

MacPherson ignored this. 'We couldn't get to the best bits, because they all had signs up saying *Wights Only*.' And he burst out laughing. 'And then, do you know what happened when we complained to the Dungeon Master?'

'He said it was a case of Wraith Relations,' said the Thief in a tired voice.

'Yes!' exulted MacPherson, and fell about laughing again.

'If we could be serious a moment,' interrupted Ebenezer, 'haven't we got any missile weapons we can use against these things through the bars?'

'Ah, there we are,' cried the Fightingman. 'Things aren't so bad after all. Where's my bow... er, where's my bow? I'm sure I had it when we set out...'

The party gave him a tired look.

'Um. Perhaps things are so bad after all.'

'If I might make a suggestion,' offered Evans, 'while you lot have been cavorting, I have been working on a plan' (here he paused for effect). 'Ocelot, have you still got that Purple Potion you found? The one you couldn't identify and smelt of Parma Violets? You have? Good. Now, I didn't tell you at the time since you wouldn't give it to me, but I think I know what it is. Or at least, it's one of three things. It may simply be a powerful breath freshener, in which case it will do some good anyway. Or it may be a Potion of Kobold Repulsion, since it is well known that Kobolds abhor the smell of Parma Violets. Or it may be a third thing, in which case we are saved. I happen to have with me an Extension scroll, which I think will heighten the effect. Now, Duralex, in that circus act of yours, you do a few more tricks than jumping about and falling over, don't you?'

'Mais oui, my act is varied, but I do not see...'

'And would I be right in thinking that you sometimes do a firebreathing stunt as part of your act?'

'Mais oui, but...'

'Good. Now if I'm not mistaken, this is how you do it. You take a mouthful of oil, and spray it out between your lips through a flame to produce a fountain of fire out of the fine shower of droplets. Is that not how it is done?'

'Ow do you know that? It is a great secret.'

'Aha,' smiled the Magician. 'I don't have an Intelligence of 17 for nothing. What I want you to do is to spray the potion over the Ghouls in the same way as you normally spray oil. If the worst comes to the worst, at least it will clear up that abominable smell of garlic.'

The Magician took the phial from the Thief, unstoppered it, and carefully set it down on the floor; everyone stood back as he took out a scroll and sonorously read out the spell. The smell of Parma Violets, already strong, became almost overpowering. Then, without a word, the smiling Magician handed the little bottle to the Tumbler and indicated the Ghouls with a sweep of his hand. Duralex stepped forward, hesitated, and took a swig. Then, with a barely audible rasping sound, he spewed a fine spray of liquid over the ghastly creatures beyond the bars. The party strained their eyes to see what would happen. Slowly, and then more quickly, the Ghouls got smaller and smaller. By the time they were only six inches tall, the Thief had got the bars open.

'Stomp on them!' went up the cry.

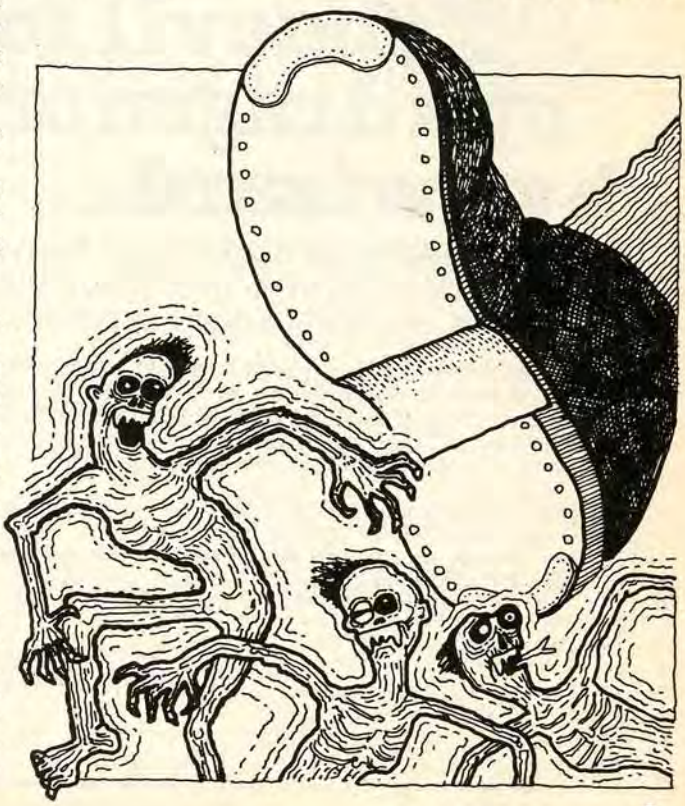
The Ghouls, having been taken by surprise by the effects of the Shrinking Potion, were in utter confusion. They checked for morale, thought better of it, and raced through the second set of bars as fast as their tiny legs would carry them, even as the Thief went to work on the second lock. MacPherson turned to Duralex.

'Brilliantly done,' he said, 'Brilliant.'

'Ah,' said the Frenchman modestly, 'Thank Evans for little Ghouls.'

Roger Musson

Ebenezer carefully threw the die on the floor.
'Three,' he said.
'Rubbish,' cried the Thief angrily, 'Do it properly.'



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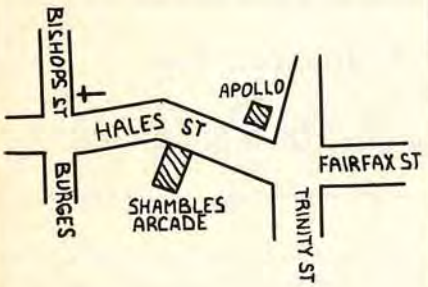

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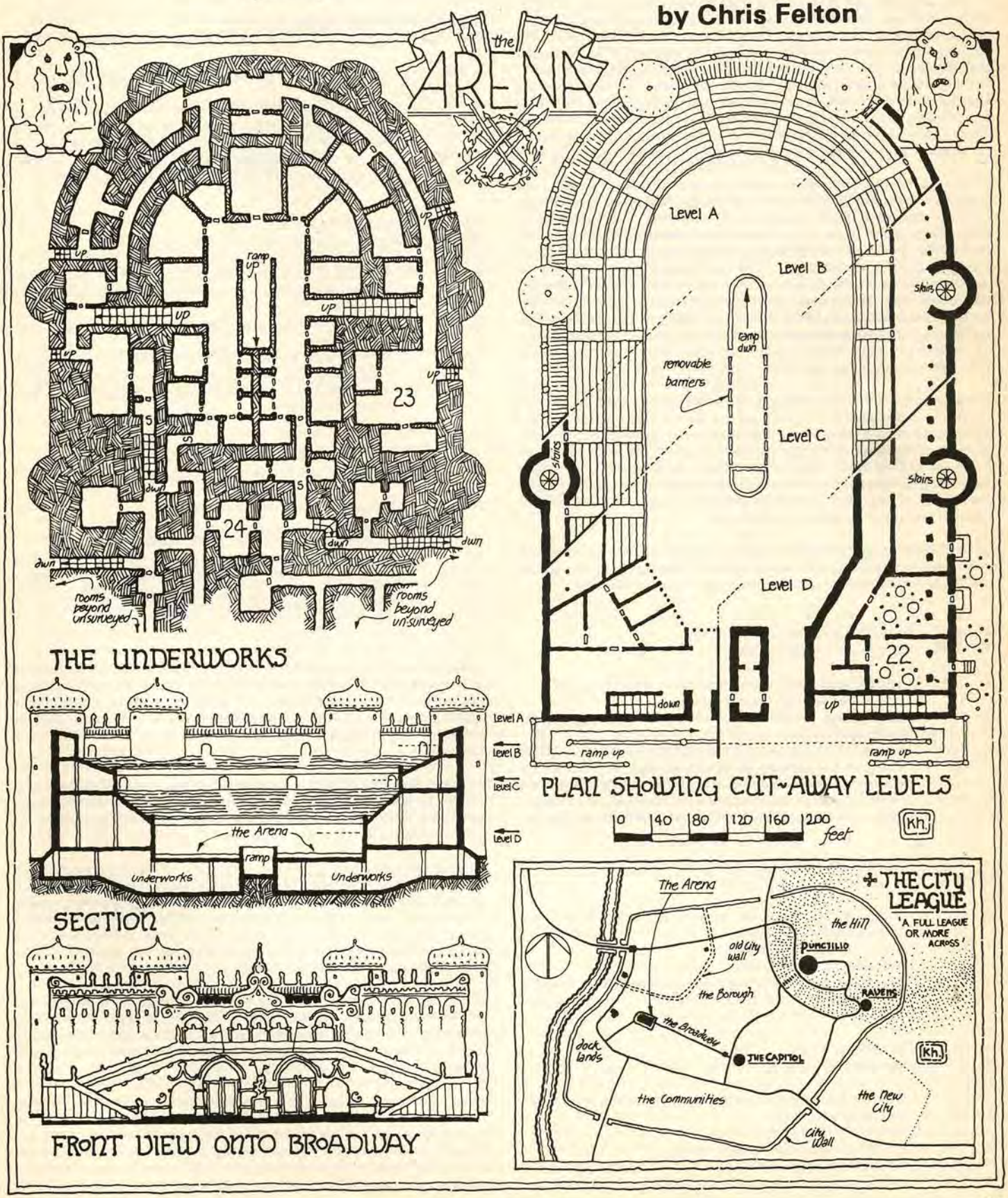
THE CITY LEAGUE

21 THE ARENA

by Chris Felton



Situated at the north-western end of the Broadway so that its great pillars face the Capitol down the Broadway's length, the Arena is the centre of the city's sporting life. It is one of the few places in the League where the law against gatherings on festival days does not apply, and its Games are consequently heavily attended. Attendances have dropped, however, since the calendar change reduced the number of festivals, and because smaller arenas have appeared elsewhere in the City League (and in some towns in Cerwyn). Each district has its own arena, known by its district name (Borough Arena, New City Arena, etc), but throughout Pelinore this place is known as *the* Arena. Since running it is an expensive business, it is quietly subsidised by the Katar — a populace sated on vicarious thrills in the Games is less likely to be troublesome!

Games include man-to-man and man-to-monster combat; chariot, horse, monster and foot races; and execution by monster. Only Religious Orders now condemn blasphemers to death this way as the Secular Courts prefer quieter and quicker methods. The convicted prisoner is thrown naked into the Pit with a hungry beast. Traditionally, if the prisoner single-handedly defeats the three toughest monsters available, then he or she is set free (the chief prosecutor in the trial is then thrown to the beasts in exchange). These combats are called the Three Trials. Currently the Third Trial is an eight-headed hydra and as a consequence no-one has survived the Trials for some time.

Within the Arena's confines are several enterprises that provide for the needs of the crowds, including two taverns, Zalu's (**22**) and Quarl's (**23**). On big days the place swarms with amateur and professional bookmakers (punters must seek their own redress against cheats as, technically, gambling isn't allowed). Beneath the building are housed the gladiators and monsters. The gladiators are a mixture of professionals and unwilling conscripts, all receiving regal treatment before a contest. Also in these Underworks are an armoury and a forge. Beneath the Underworks is the home of a Chapter of a Secret Cult (**24**), and beneath that are further chambers, long forgotten. The map (drawn by Ograffa the Mapmaker) shows only those areas that are known, although it is rumoured that other, more extensive, maps do exist.

Entrance to the Arena is by a series of doors that can be shut firmly when the Arena is closed or full. At one end is a special area reserved for the Katar, and beside it are prestige booths let out at Marrik's discretion. In theory it costs 250gp a day but in practice this sum can be multiplied as rivals vie to hire them. Other seats vary in price from 1sp to 100gp depending on how near to the action and the Katar they are. There is no better way of impressing business partners or country cousins than treating them to good seats at the games.

Of the following characters **21a & 21b** live with their servants on the unmapped top floor of the Arena, the others unless otherwise specified live in varying degrees of luxury and squalor in the Underworks.

21a Marrik Calazar; M; C5; N/LE;
Staff; AC 9/10; hp 20/25

	H	
S	11	☐ *Middle-aged, dark haired, blue tunic, white trousers*
I	15	☐ *Arena manager and secret curate*
W	13	☐ *Obsequious perfectionist, always seems worried by something*
D	9	
C	11	☐ *Has met the Katar and is on terms with much of the nobility due to favours he can grant with seats; knows the Secret Chapter (24) of which he is a senior member; keeps his religious background concealed and consequently would only learn spells in extremis or specifically for a function*
Ch	13	

21b Aethelron Verthill; M; Fr5; N/LN;
No weapon; AC 9/10; hp 15/21

	H	
S	10	☐ *Young, blond, muscular; wears tight trousers and silk shirts open to the waist*
I	14	☐ *Arena manager's assistant*
W	15	☐ *Vain, self-important, boring*
D	10	☐ *Known by much of the nobility; very friendly with Erriados (21d); member of the Secret Chapter*
C	10	
Ch	8	

21c Tarraneg; M; Fr7; N/LN;
Unarmed; AC 9/10; hp 17/24

	H	
S	18	☐ *Massively built eunuch usually decked out in bright silks and heavy-duty boots*
I	17	☐ *Manager of the Underworks*
W	12	☐ *Martinet, cold, cruel, loves kittens*
D	11	☐ *Revered among games fans, invited to nobles' parties (he rarely goes); knows of but shuns the Secret Chapter*
C	10	
Ch	14	

21d Erriados the Charioteer; M; F7; N/CN;
Whip; AC 9/9; hp 49/63

	H	
S	16	☐ *Young, clean-cut, handsome; affects a thlight lithp which with his silky clothes makes him appear a fop; carries a jewelled riding crop when not using his whip*
I	13	
W	13	☐ *Charioteer*
D	16	☐ *Hard, ambitious, cunning, ruthless*
C	15	☐ *Knows wilder sons of many nobles and Aethelron (21b); his history is shrouded in mystery and although he has noble bearing he never speaks of his past; the best charioteer known*
Ch	13	

21e Ell Mestikor; M; F5; N;
Dagger (Arena: net & trident); AC 8/9; hp 35/40

	H	
S	17	☐ *Aging and much-scarred; bright, cheap clothing*
I	10	☐ *Gladiator*
W	12	☐ *Convivial and happy except when viewing his future*
D	15	☐ *Known by gladiators and in most of the nearby ale-houses; having spent his purses and with his strength waning he will now do almost anything for enough money to allow him an honourable retirement, even facing the hydra....*
C	15	
Ch	10	

21f Aqop; F; F12/B9; N/CN;
Battleaxe ('The Divider'); AC 5/6; hp 78/102

	H	
S	18[41]	☐ *Archetypal barbarian, huge and bronzed; wears furs, leathers and feathers to enhance her savage appearance*
I	9	☐ *Gladiator*
W	7	☐ *Wild, fun-loving, practical joker, heavy drinker, very superstitious*
D	16	☐ *Very famous, some acquaintances but no friends as she trusts only The Divider; once a slave, Aqop liked the Gladiatorial life so much she has stayed on and is now a prime attraction*
C	18	
Ch	9	

21g Sir Follor of the Ridge; F; F7; N/LN;
Longsword; AC 8/9 (Arena: 4); hp 45/55

	H	
S	17	☐ *Tall, elegant, sumptuously dressed*
I	9	☐ *Gladiator*
W	8	☐ *Formal, serious, modest, preoccupied*
D	15	☐ *Many fighting acquaintances but will not admit to knowing anyone! Sir Follor considers himself a cowardly failure following an error of judgement during battle – now he fights to rid himself of this self-inflicted ignominy*
C	15	
Ch	14	

There are many other gladiators that fight in the arena, the ones listed above are simply the most able and famous. Most are captives of low level who fight to free themselves; but some are professionals who seek their fortunes in this desperate game. There is little petty jealousy amongst these stalwarts; their business is grim and they share a fatalistic camaraderie.

To assist Tarraneg (**21c**) there are nearly a dozen animal handlers who are specially trained to get the beasts safely into the arena and to patch up the wounded ones afterwards. They are all fighters of levels 3-5 with low intelligence and average hit points.

Around the arena are 50 men-at-arms divided into 10 squads. Each squad is led by a "Captain" (F4, hp 30/35). The men are levels 1-3 with average hit points. All are armed with longswords, nets and spears. They are ruthless and are quick to call on outside assistance if they get into trouble. Due to the special esteem with which the Arena is held, serious troublemakers will be dealt with by the Knights Ocular (**IMAGINE** magazine #19 pp10-15).

To complete the staff of the Arena, over a hundred assorted slaves and servants are controlled by Cossa Orkil under Tarraneg's watchful eye. They do most of the everyday work, and when the Arena is open, serve food to nobler viewers (a particular favourite being boar's tripe fried in auroch's dripping).

When the Arena is open, the opportunities for enterprising player-characters are virtually endless. The public areas will be filled to overflowing with people of all races and professions. In particular, thieves will find the environment perfect for earning a little dishonest money, while clerics from all the major religions will be found trying to persuade honest gamblers, hoydens and cutpurses to mend their ways.

22 MADAME ZALU'S TAVERN

Of the two genuine taverns that serve the Arena (along with the general food and drink supplied by the Arena's servants) this one is definitely the more up-market. With its colourful street awnings and parasols added to the mystique of its proprietor, Mme Zalu's is a very trendy place to be seen. Which is possibly why no-one objects to the horrendous prices. Mme Zalu used to run a fortune-telling stall in the various markets as a front for her burgling. Her dream interpretations were always very accurate, much to her own surprise, and one day a dream revealed a great treasure — somewhere beneath the Arena. She took all her savings and opened this tavern so she could search unhindered. Dreams are funny things — who knows whether the treasure she seeks is actually hidden in the forgotten chambers of the Underworks or is in fact the huge profit she generates in her popular tavern.

22a Madame Zalu; F; T8; N;

Unarmed (Adventuring: poison dagger); AC 7; hp 20/30

H/½ E
S 10 ☐ *Well-dressed, attractive, young, usually heavily made-up*
I 18 ☐ *Tavern-keeper, pilferer/sharper*
W 11 ☐ *Bright, cheerful, pleasant*
D 17 ☐ *Many suitors, member of local thieves' guild, very famous*
C 11
Ch 12

Zalu employs 10 fighter/guard/helpers (F2-5, average hp) who do the donkey work in the tavern and assist her in her secret forays into the depths of the Underworks.

22b Zoreen; F; T4; N;

Dagger; AC 7; hp 10/15

H
S 12 ☐ *Slim and tall; dresses like a boy*
I 16 ☐ *Adventurer*
W 11 ☐ *Cheerful, aggressive, liar*
D 17 ☐ *Zalu's (**22a**) daughter; Zoreen makes the Tavern her base; she works as an independent which doesn't please her mother or the local guild*
C 11
Ch 14

23 THE GLADIATOR'S REST

Although rougher and scruffier than Zalu's, this too is a trendy drinking house, but for very different reasons. This is the place the gladiators go for refreshment when they are not 'working'. Consequently fight fans throng here to mix with their heroes and heroines. Actually to have bought Aqop a drink — now, there's something to tell your friends! The tavern is owned by an absentee landlord called Quarl (**51a**, Fr6, hp20) and managed by Angor Poddikan. There was a time when Poddikan was Quarl's boss and was fast developing a sizeable business empire. But Poddikan reckoned without the evil betrayal of his assistant. As Poddikan's fortunes faded, so did his mind, resulting in a complete collapse. Quarl seized his opportunity and took control of everything Poddikan had built up. In a rare moment of remorse Quarl established his one-time boss in this tavern. This story is public knowledge, along with the fact that Quarl also stole Poddikan's beautiful young wife Drassanna (**51b**), and there are many regulars of the Gladiator's Rest who would be delighted if the worm turned. To assist Poddikan there are 6 bar-staff/guards all F2, hp 8/10

23a Angor Poddikan; M; Fr7; N;

Unarmed; AC 9/10; hp 17/21

H
S 15 ☐ *Young, handsome, well-dressed; hang-dog expression*
I 13 ☐ *Tavern-keeper*
W 15 ☐ *Perpetually depressed and lacking in self-confidence*
D 11 ☐ *Knows Quarl and local merchants*
C 10
Ch 7

23b Melom; F; Fr2; L/LG;

Unarmed; AC 9/10; hp 6/8

E
S 12 ☐ *Simply dressed; stunningly beautiful*
I 16 ☐ *Peasant*
W 16 ☐ *Charming, smitten, slow-witted*
D 15 ☐ *Melom loves Angor (**23a**) who hardly notices her; she hangs around the tavern day and night; the regulars mock her, but she reacts only when they mock Angor*
C 11
Ch 18

24 SECRET CHAPTER

Beneath the Underworks lie the chambers used by a Chapter of a Secret Cult. Organised and controlled by Kanwas Pyral (**24a**) the Cult follows arcane teachings and has influence in many strange and powerful places. Healthy, honest folk shun the activities of the Cult for they debilitate the mind and rot the body. Nevertheless the weak-willed are drawn to it and it boasts some surprising members — judges, officials, military leaders and the senior staff of the Arena. Although the entrance through the Arena is the one most often used by members there are other entrances that lead to cellars and wells and sewers.

24a Kanwas Pyral; M; C9; C/LE;

Horseman's Flail +3; AC 0/1; hp 45/55

H
S 10 ☐ *Thin, balding; blue tunic over chain mail*
I 16 *AD&D: **Chainmail +4, boots of striding and springing, potion of sweet water, ring of shooting stars***
W 18 *D&D: **Chainmail +4, boots of traveling and leaping, potion of antidote, staff of harming***
D 14
C 14
Ch 15 ☐ *Patriarch/High Priest*
☐ *Grim, brooding, intense*
☐ *Knows only senior Cult members, keeps close watch on City League leaders as far as he can*

Usual spells memorised:

AD&D (6,6,4,3,1): 1 (1, 2x2, 4x2, 7); 2 (3, 6, 5x2, 9x2); 3 (5, 6x2, 11); 4 (2 rev, 6, 9)

D&D (3,3,3,2): 1 (1x2, 4); 2 (1, 3, 4); 3 (3, 6, 8); 4 (5, 8); 5 (9)

24b

Kanwas is always accompanied by a hooded follower (C7, hp32/35) with similar spells but no magical items. Kanwas was once such a follower and succeeded his mentor just as this one will succeed Kanwas. The identity of the follower is known only to Kanwas who is passing on all his secrets secure in the knowledge that one day he will be murdered and usurped by this follower; such is the way of the Cult.

PLOTLINES

1 Nothing has proved quite as popular in recent years as the Third Trial by the hydra. Each appearance of this magnificent beast guarantees a full house at the Arena. Thus it is very definitely in the interests of the manager, Marrik (**21a**), and other interested parties, to keep the hydra alive, to keep the tradition of Trial by Beast going and to ensure that the condemned survive the first two Trials. Jealous local arena owners are unlikely to share these aims and are quite likely to offer generous rewards to adventurers unscrupulous enough, brave enough (and stupid enough!) to kill the hydra or to find some other way of stopping the third Trial.

2 Some of the gladiators (Sir Follor and Erriados in particular) are real enigmas — obviously connected to some noble house and equally obviously hiding some dark secret. Perhaps there is some ancient wrong to be righted or avenged, some disgrace to be disproved or some truth to be unearthed. Whatever it is, there is sure to be money and glory in it somewhere for brave adventurers — or even cowardly ones!

3 It's inevitable that when you keep nasty monsters in your basement sooner or later one of them is going to escape and run away down secret passages. It's equally inevitable that you can't afford to lose such a valuable item, so you are more than likely to offer a huge reward to any party whose can go after it and fetch it back — unharmed, of course!

4 The story of Poddikan and Quarl might seem like the most obvious story to follow up, but this is not going to be as easy as it seems. Should characters try to track him down, they will find an infuriating trail of dead ends and mysterious silences. Middle men run all his business interests, shielding other middle men who will offer no answers. No home address can be discovered. Perhaps most disturbing is the fact that what leads there are all lead towards one place — the Katar's palace....

CHARIOT RACING in the CITY LEAGUE

These are the rules of a simple chariot-racing game that will allow you and your fellow players to re-enact the drama and excitement of the Arena — a City League building published elsewhere in this issue. If you don't use the City league material the game still works well and is fun to play for its own sake.

Set-Up

Cut out the plan of the Arena from the centre of this issue. You should find two corner pieces and two straight pieces. By aligning the two corner pieces you will make a track the same size as that in the Arena in the City League. The two straights are to be used if you want to have races in other arenas, or, by alternating the straights in a 1-2-1-2-1 sequence you could simulate a race down the full length of the Broadway! It is recommended that you mount the Arena pieces on card to give them extra durability.

Next cut out the tokens that are used for the chariots and their teams. These too should be mounted on card.

Finally make copies (you may photocopy this part of the magazine if you wish) of the chariot record cards printed below so you can keep track of progress.

Rules

These rules are not meant to be encyclopaedic. If they do not precisely explain something, invent a rule for yourself to cover it. Certain 'home advantages' could be built into different Arenas in this way.

Select a chariot from those you cut out. Before starting play, make a record card and note the Skill score and Structure Points score that apply to your chariot. Decide which of your characters is to be the driver and note his or her characteristics where required. Some of the chariots have more Structure points than others. If you want a balanced race give more Skill points to a driver whose chariot has fewer Structure points on a one-for-one basis. You are free to invent chariots of your own if you wish. If the players are simulating a private race, then clearly chariots with more Structure Points cost more to buy.

Order of play

All chariots move and then all drivers perform combat routines if possible. Chariots move in the order of the position they hold in the race — so the leading chariot moves first. If two chariots are together then the one nearest the central barrier is considered to be leading. If you have any doubts about who's leading check diagram 1. Drivers fight in the reverse order of their positions after movement (ie, the character at the back makes the first attack) — again consult diagram 1 if you're not sure.

Movement

Chariots must move one hex for each point of current speed shown. The maximum speed possible is that shown on the chariot token. You should keep a record of how fast your chariot is going on your record card. The chariot may accelerate by up to 3 points each turn and may decelerate as allowed on table 1. During each turn each chariot may change its heading by 60 degrees (ie, by one hex-side). This change of facing may only occur during the second half of the movement, so a chariot going at a speed of 7 may not turn in the first 3 hexes. A chariot may side slip (see diagram 2) once per turn. Note that no change of heading occurs during a side-slip.

Combat

After movement any chariots in adjacent hexes may conduct combat. Drivers may whip other drivers or chariots may be deliberately crashed into other chariots or both. Use the normal D&D and AD&D combat tables for the whipping attack — these whips do 1d4+1 points of damage — and use table 2 for chariot crashing damage. Note that crashing may damage your chariot more than your opponent's. If during a whipping attack a natural 20 is rolled the whip has wrapped around some part of the opponent. The stronger combatant then pulls the weaker from his or her chariot — whereupon the whip breaks loose. A character rolling a natural 1 loses the whip due to entanglement.

Falling from a chariot

If all the Structure points of a chariot are expended or if a driver is pulled off during combat, then the driver falls to the ground taking damage equal to the speed of the chariot. In each case the driver should make a dexterity check (roll 1d20 to get less than the dexterity score). If the check is failed the driver is caught in the reins and is dragged along behind the chariot taking speed damage as above each turn. Check each turn to see if the driver breaks free. Chariots without drivers lose one point of speed each turn and may not change heading.

Skill

Each charioteer has a certain skill rating (usually about 6 although Erriador — see Pelinore this issue — would have 15). Player characters all start with a Skill of 0 — they need to win some races to earn the Skill points! These skill points can be spent during a race. For each point spent the player may increase the speed of the chariot by 1 or make an extra side-slip or both. Only one skill point may be spent on speed each turn although any number may be spent on side-slipping. For each race won the Skill of the driver is increased by one point.

Whipping horses

The horses may be whipped to make then go 1 space faster each turn. No combat of any sort is allowed by that charioteer if the horses were whipped that turn.

Crashing

It is possible that the chariot may crash into a wall. In that case use table 2 treating the chariot as the victim.

Winning

The winner is the chariot which goes furthest across the finishing line on the final turn (not the first across the line).

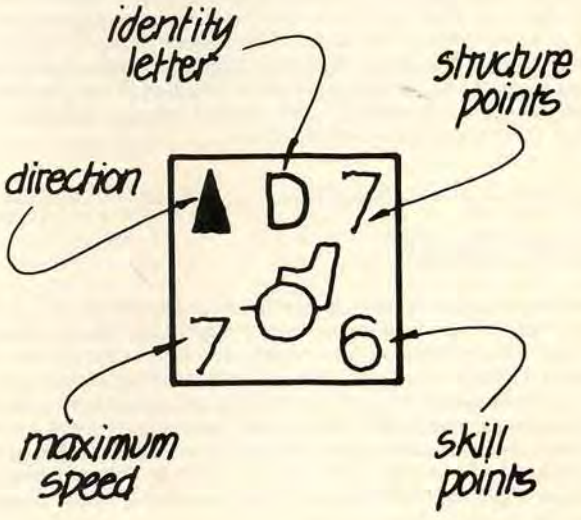


Diagram One

To decide the order of play, the players should compare the position in their game to the diagram on the far right. The leading chariot of two side-by-side is the one towards the centre of the Arena. In the three examples on the right, the chariots would move in alphabetical order.

Diagram Two

A chariot may side-slip once per turn, in addition to any turning manoeuvre. Each additional side-slip per turn will cost one skill point. An example of a side-slip is shown to the right. This chariot is moving at speed three.

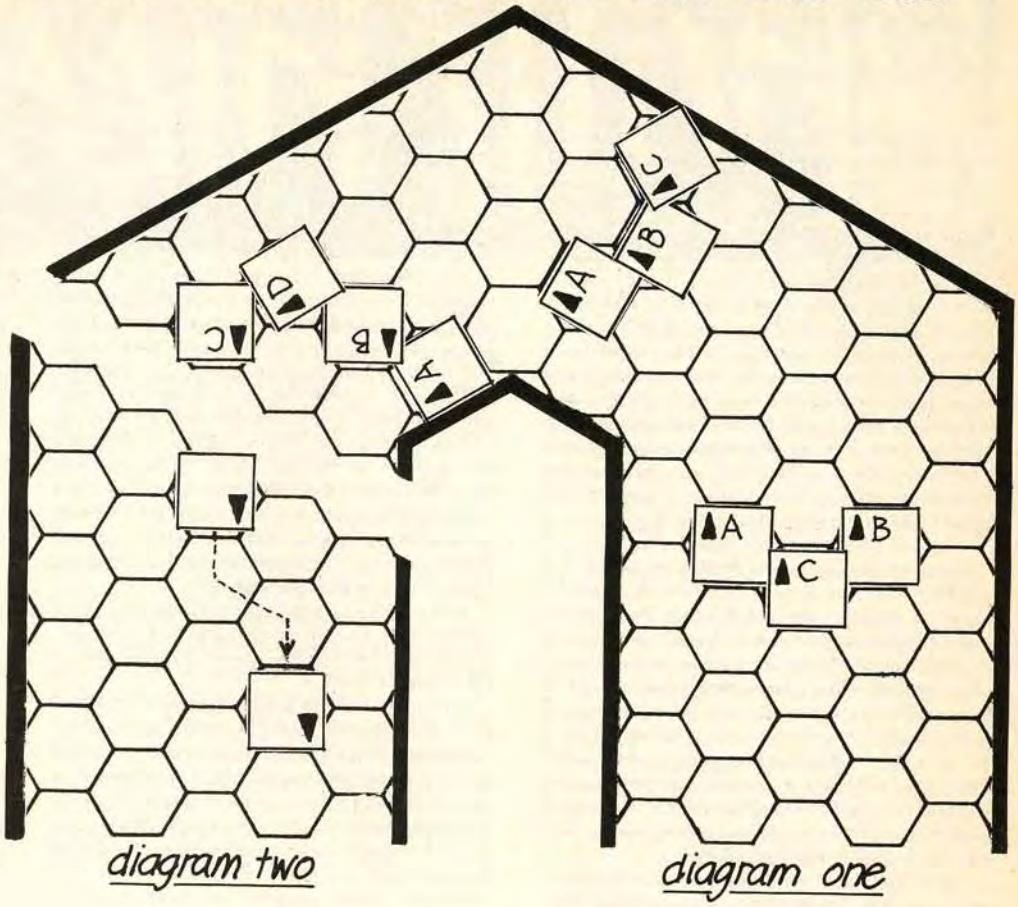


Table 1: Braking strength

Strength of driver AD&D	D&D	
14 or less	13 or less	1 point per turn
15-17	14-15	2 points per turn
18	16	3 points per turn[1]
18^{01}-18^{50}	17	4 points per turn[2]
18^{51}-18^{00}	18	5 points per turn[2]

Notes

[1] *Braking three or more points per turn requires both hands. Therefore, no attacking is possible in the same turn.*

[2] *Braking four or more points per turn requires both hands, as above, but also* ***permanently*** *reduces maximum speed by one.*

Table 2: Crashing chariots

Speed Differential	Damage to victim's chariot	Damage to own chariot
0 1	1d3	1d3
2 3	1d4	
4 4+	1d6	

Race Record

Skill Points Remaining

Structure Points Remaining

Current Speed

Driver's hp

Driver:

STR:

DEX:

DIALOG *by Lew Pulsipher*

Being the life and times of a son of the 'New Patriotism'

I was sitting at my desk in Castle Puls, evidently with a faraway look on my face, because as soon as my Alter Ego came in he asked what was up.

'You know, I played in the semi-annual invitational D&D recently, and Zandy put us through a more-or-less old-fashioned dungeon instead of devising a specific-mission one-off adventure. And everyone seemed to like it. It wasn't extremely old-fashioned, because there was at least some rationale for the existence of the place, and there was plenty of room between encounters instead of a door every 30 feet, but other than that it was quite dungeonlike. The players liked it; and although many of them aren't exactly sophisticated in their tastes, preferring 'good ol hack'n'slash', I suspect that most D&Ders have the same tastes.'

'So what's the problem?' Alter asked.

'You know I've been trying to make my underground scenarios as "realistic" as possible, even to having the inhabitants wander in, wander around, and clash with other inhabitants in the process of finding a place to live. And I abandoned my huge dungeon years ago. But I'm not sure it all makes for the most interesting game from the players' point of view. So I haven't been constructing underground scenarios lately. Now I'm thinking about making another huge all-purpose "dungeon" that could accommodate all, or at least most, tastes, and wondering what to emphasize.'

Alter pondered this. 'I guess you'll just have to try to make it "realistic" ' — you could hear the quotemarks in Alter's voice — 'and retain as many traditional elements as you can.'

'Easier said than done,' I said. 'There are all sorts of problem. For example, my notes say that two of the most exciting times in a dungeon adventure are getting lost and getting attacked by a wandering monster when the party is already fighting someone. But there won't be much wandering in a "realistic" dungeon....'

'Except patrols.'

'Yes, but many groups aren't large enough or organized enough to patrol frequently, and I refuse to believe that some "mad wizard" or other creature controls the entire place. No way.'

'As for getting lost,' I continued, 'or maybe I should say "cut off from the exit", the usual methods are one-way doors, rotating rooms, sinking rooms, teleports and chutes. But how many dungeon inhabitants are going to build such things, and the original builders of the place aren't likely to have installed them, so how can they realistically get there? They can't.'

Alter shrugged. 'That's okay. A lot of hack-and-slash types hate getting lost; they don't even like to be required to travel to the dungeon. They just want to beat up one monster after another. So I wouldn't put in many ways of getting lost.'

'Perhaps. I think that to help the "realism" angle I'll have to set the dungeon in-under the City of a Thousand Names that I'm creating as a background for fiction. Then I'll be forced to ditch the least believable ideas, and I'll have a starting reference point, and this'll help me stay away from making the place too AD&D oriented, because the city is intended to be a background for fiction as well as for games.'

'Did you read what Roger Musson said about "adventure" or one-off dungeons and "main" dungeons?' (#5) As you know, Alter is an avid IMAGINE reader.

'Yes, and I see the point, although I disagree with the sizes he mentions. My "adventure" dungeons — which are often buildings above ground, such as a magic user's stronghold — have as few as a dozen rooms. Making one with a hundred rooms would be a waste of effort, since the players surely won't even visit most of those rooms. And it's easier to make a place of adventure fairly "realistic" if there are fewer rooms.'

'And I remember, when you started a "main" dungeon you worked level by level, rather than try to create a massive place all at once.'

'Yes, it's impossible to be reasonable and varied and imaginative and still fill up a huge space, hundreds of rooms according to RM, in one stretch. And why expend a lot of effort on places the players may never reach? Especially for a beginning referee, it's easier to make the first couple of levels, not too large, to get a feel for what's going on and what the players like, and then keep a couple of levels ahead of them.'

'Like a new teacher staying just ahead of the students in an unfamiliar subject.' As he said this, Alter began to sketch some kind of dungeon on some graph paper.

'Also, I wouldn't differentiate the two types of dungeon by size. The governing factor is "command control". If a place is controlled by a single entity or group, it's suitable for one or a series of connected adventure sessions, until the controllers are defeated. If it's not controlled by anyone, then the adventurers can come round as often or as seldom as they like. Size matters insofar as the larger a place is, the harder it is for one entity to control it all. Nor does a dungeon of any sort need to be packed tight, one room after another. In fact, that not only makes it easier for the players, because their ranged **detect** spells cover a larger percentage of the dungeon, it also makes for silly juxtapositions.'

'Like the orc horde living a few hundred feet from the dwarves, you mean?'

'Right. Here, hand me that paper.' I sketched a few "room" complexes on widely separated parts of several sheets of paper, then drew a separate diagram of lines connecting squares.

'This may be the ideal way to make a "main dungeon", sort of modular construction as they call it. Instead of cramming everything together on one sheet of graph paper, even a big one, you draw the individual complexes separately — the orc lair here, the evil cleric's temple there, the old graveyard/catacomb on another sheet. Then you make a large-scale diagram showing the tunnels that connect the separate areas you've drawn. The diagram need not even be to scale, though it's more convenient when it is. If there is the occasional empty room or small group of rooms here and there along the tunnels, they can be marked on the main diagram without being drawn separately.'

'This is probably easier for the players to map too.'

'Yes, but it may be harder to cut them off or let them get lost.'

'But isn't drawing the dungeon first putting the cart before the horse?'

'Yes, you should write some descriptions first, including history/reasons why the place exists, then draw something. But we can't talk about that now...'

Lew Pulsipher

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ILLUMINATIONS

DE LUXE RQ

It may seem odd, but it turns out that it only comes in an ordinary cardboard box. No velvet cushion nor mink-trimmed book covers. Not even a particularly marvellous box illo. I'm talking about **RuneQuest 3** of course, now available for only £39.95 (de luxe set). 'What on earth do you get for that price?' is a question, couched in terms of incredulity, that I've already become accustomed to hearing since I furtively brought a set home. The question is easily answered since Avalon Hill have thoughtfully included a sheet headed *'What's in this box'*. There are five soft-covered books: Players', Magic, Gamemaster's, Creatures, and Glorantha. They are all self-explanatory except Glorantha which is a book detailing the campaign setting of RQ's designers.

As well as this campaign material, RQ3 includes a map of, and information concerning, a fantasy campaign in Dark Age-ish Europe. There is also a booklet called Players' Notes which includes play hints, summaries of character generation rules and how to convert old RQ characters to the new rules. And there's the rub. The new system is significantly altered. Doubtless a full review will appear in IMAGINE magazine, detailing these changes; suffice it to say that they preclude mixing RQ1 & 2 with 3 without extensive conversion work.

Is it worth the heavyweight price? Well, it sure isn't a bargain but, speaking as an RQ enthusiast since the first printing of the first edition, I'd say that almost any price is worth paying for this marvellous, original and highly sophisticated games system. And remember, by the time you've bought the first three **AD&D** books, you've paid out £30....

Brawling in the Streets

Back to more prosaic games. Avalon Hill have released **The Yeti Sanction**, which is an adventure module for Lords of Creation. Let me quote from the description on th back of the box... *'YETI. The Young Everest Terrorist International operated a world-wide network for extortion, kidnapping and assassination. They were led by Anton Markov, the mad Russian anarchist who had once been chief of the KGB's Asian Bureau. Markov was a fanatic...'* — and so on, a classic piece from the AH ad department.

The players in this module are charged with the responsibility of rescuing the US Secretary of State. This will involve them in traditional Outdoor Pursuits such as climbing Mount Everest and defeating 'a host of foes reaching out from beyond the bounds of unknown dimensions.' Gordon Bennett!

There is also a new module for **Powers & Perils**. Players start by brawling in the streets of Porta, and end (if all goes well) by combating the ultimate magical power of the game world. On the way from the one to the other, they have to traverse some pretty unpleasant terrain. In fact the whole thing sounds rather unpleasant with words like 'festering' and 'putrescent' liberally spotting the description. All in all, a good module to avoid playing if you're thinking of inviting the vicar round for a game. **Yeti Sanction** £9.95; **Tower of the Dead** £8.95

Transatlantic Tales

It will come as no surprise to you, having skimmed the contents of this magazine, that the major release in the UK at the moment is the **MARVEL SUPERHEROES** game. Pete Tamlyn's review on page 18 shows just how much material is already on show, and there is another scenario, **Lone Wolves**, and a set of cardboard figures due in the New Year. I'm sure the designers have plenty more up their sleeves for later on; which brings me to a delicate point. Two issues ago, I intimated that the MSH designers had left TSR for pastures new. They haven't, and the team is busy now on extending the MSH range. My apologies to them all.

Devotees of the AD&D® game may well hear tell that a new volume, **Legends & Lore**, has appeared in the shops. Don't be confused if you are already the owner of a copy of the DEITIES & DEMIGODS Cyclopedia; this is a repackaged version of the same volume, and the contents are exactly the same.

Stopping only to boast that the latest figures we have seen show UK2 **The Gauntlet** at the top of the 1984 best-sellers list, we can proudly announce the arrival of UK5 **Learning The Hard Way** and UK6 **All That Glitters**. More modules will be on release in the New Year; CM2 **Death's Ride**, X7 **War Rafts of Kron**, X8 **Drums of Fire Mountain** and the latest in the epic Dragonlance saga, DL5 **Dragons of Mystery**. For those of you who want to go deeper into this series, there will also be the DL Source Book and even a DL Novel, **Dragons of Autumn Twilight**.

Lastly, the latest SPI re-release will be that of the **Spies** game, a popular game in its last incarnation.

Secret Ingredient

Standard Games are pursuing a relentless policy of controlled leaks to heighten pre-release interest in their forthcoming all-British, all wonderful rpg. In case you're concerned about this, it does not signify a corporate physiological malfunction; rather it is a system of providing carefully selected, periodic snippets of information so that columns like this one will mention the damned thing every month.

Standard's official propaganda machine tells us that the game will be called **Dragon's Roar**. There will be a Basic Set which includes a solo adventure and a group adventure, coloured character counters and character sheets. Among the monsters we can look forward to, say Standard with a certain discreet pride, are Giant Hedgehogs and Killer Penguins. Following up the Basic Set will come a Dictionary of Dragons, a Compendium of Knowledge and several modules, the first of which is called A Matter of Honour. Still no clue of what the secret ingredient 'x' will be. Standard's marketing main man John Maitland persists in maintaining that this idea will be latched onto by all their competitors as soon as they know what it is.

An unofficial Standard source (Peter O'Toole, the designer) describes the mystery ingredient succinctly enough. He says it's 'brilliant'. He also tells me that the combat system is much more detailed than that in **Cry Havoc**. Apparently it's based on a delightful little set of rules he wrote while he was at university, called Blood and Snot. How quaint.

Standard are also going into the figures manufacturing business with a range of medievals to complement their Cry Havoc system games.

Off-the-Peg Figures

Someone else going into figure manufacture is Prince August. So far they have produced a range of moulds with which gamers can cast their own figures. Now there will be Prince August ready-mades as well. It's not yet clear whether these will be an entirely new range or taken from their home-cast ranges.

Down Under

Another Australian gaming magazine has recently come my way. **Multiverse** is an A4, 36-page prozine with the sub-title of The Australian Roleplaying Gamers' Magazine. The Spring '84 issue has articles on **Traveller** (hi-tech starships); Vampires in AD&D as a character class (something to get your teeth into, etc, etc); Priests and Paladins for **Dragonquest** (whatever happened to DQ by the way?) and a Superhero adventure. There is a sterling cover price of £1.95 but I don't know of any importer at present.

Notices

MARVEL SUPER

One thing that has to be said about this game is, 'with so many Superhero rpgs on the market already, who needs another one?' I suppose one could reply that none of the existing games have taken off to any great extent. How often do you see articles about, say, **V&V** or **Champions** in professional magazines? Then again, this game has been produced in collaboration with Marvel and that opportunity itself is probably worth a new game release. However, **MARVEL SUPERHEROES™** is not just another Superhero game. In many ways it is substantially different from other SHrpgs.

Those of you who have bought more than one set of rpg rules will by now be used to opening the book and finding that the first chapter concerns character generation. Not so with MSH, this game is about playing Marvel characters. When you buy the game you get character sheets for several of the better-known heroes and each scenario pack contains the necessary extra characters for that adventure. True, there are some comments on designing your own hero at the back of the campaign book, but the system provided is by no means as comprehensive as those given in other games and I get the impression that it is not intended for general use. Pregenerated characters actually make the game easier to run as you don't need to describe the characters' powers in terms of a complex character generation system. However, playing a well-known, clearly defined character can be a much more difficult roleplaying exercise than playing someone you've designed yourself, especially if you are not 100% familiar with the comic character in question.

The design of MSH is different from existing games in other ways as well. Many of the systems are somewhat reminiscent of the **James Bond** game, for example the use of Karma points which allow the heroes to modify their die rolls when they are in a tight corner, and the grading of actions according to their difficulty. Overall, however, the game is much simpler than Bond — perhaps designed with a younger audience in mind — but also leaning towards the D&D philosophy of allowing the GM to improvise when necessary rather than the AD&D concept of 'a table for everything'. It is probably the easiest rpg to learn and GM that I have ever seen (though I confess to falling over myself a few times in running playtests due to sheer overconfidence).

The referee's screen has kindly been packaged in with a whole lot of useful information about New York and the Marvel Universe. As

CHAMPIONS Supplements

I have very mixed feelings about **Champions** as a game system. Where the MARVEL SUPERHEROES™ game tries to make life easy by expecting you to use pregenerated characters, Champions spends over half of the main rule book on character design. And if this weren't enough, large parts of the two supplements, **Champions II** and **Champions III**, are devoted to expansions of this.

Considering the complexity of the character generation system, the set of character rolling tables finally produced in Champions III must seem like a Manna from Heaven to Champions GMs. On the other hand, some of the stuff in Champions II was mildly astonishing. Did you know that you can make best use of the Champions game mechanics by having all your character's Prime Requisite scores ending in 3 or 8? Did you want to know, and will you make use of the fact? Is this roleplaying or a book of mathematical puzzles? On the other hand, secreted away among the reams of hardware and commentary thereon are a number of truly excellent articles which prove that the designers of Champions do know what roleplaying is all about, and are of interest to any GM regardless of the game she or he intends to run. If you want advice on how to run a good campaign, get these two supplements.

Champions players, however, will probably be interested in useful new rule systems. Champions II is quite good in this respect, covering a lot of stuff that doubtless got squeezed out of the initial book by all the character design material. Designing your own hideouts and vehicles is covered, as are character income, encounter charts and legal implications of superheroing. Champions III is not so good in this respect. With the notable exception of the random character generator mentioned above, most of the hardware concerns new powers or modifications to old ones. It is more of a set of upgrade notes than a supplement.

Enemies I (there is an **Enemies II** as well) is simply a list of Supervillains. Again the designers manage to demonstrate their awareness of the importance of atmosphere by giving each character an interesting background. Even so I would not normally recommend anyone with a decent imagination to bother with this, were it not for the fact that the villains get used elsewhere. **The Island of Dr Destroyer**, one of the scenario packs, uses several of the characters from Enemies I, giving their stats but not their backgrounds. This is quite naughty enough, but I notice that my copy of Enemies I had *revised* stamped on the cover. Sure enough, the stats for some of the villains in Enemies I were different from those in the scenario!

Deathstroke, the third scenario pack, is an altogether better proposition. Whereas Island of Dr Destroyer is a simple raid scenario that sounds vaguely reminiscent of a number of James Bond plots, Deathstroke has a certain amount of subtlety and complexity to it. It also provides full backgrounds for the baddies (despite the fact that they were nearly all featured in Enemies II). In addition it suggests that players control the villains as well and provides as much of a challenge for them as for the goodies. This is a very interesting departure, though while the designers say that it works well, I have my doubts about the ease of running such an operation. ***Pete Tamlyn***

HEROES™ GAME

most of the actions are adjudicated on two very simple tables, the designers must have been at a loss as to what to put on the screen. They seem to have opted for throwing in every table in the book regardless of how often it is needed. Personally I think a few words of explanation about the commonly-used tables might have been a far better choice.

The scenarios, like the main game, are nicely put together and well illustrated by Marvel artists. Marvel writers and editors have also helped in the production to ensure that characters are portrayed in the expected manner. The plots are suitably involved (though perhaps the one for the Avengers is a bit too involved) and have no obvious loop-holes. Maps/playing boards are provided, which is just as well considering the game's special area movement system. However, a Superhero rpg stands and falls on how well it recreates the atmosphere of the comics and, while MSH's game mechanics and authentic Marvel background put it ahead of most others in this league, there are still a few shortfalls.

To start with, when you are reading a comic you don't often stop to consider the rationale of a super villain's actions; the author knows what he wants both sides to do and constructs a storyline round this. In a game the storyline is generated by the players' perceptions of what is going on and the whole thing tends to fall down if the GM has to do much prompting to get them to go in the right direction. By having villains stupidly standing on top of skyscrapers threatening to lay waste to the surrounding area as they are wont to do in comics, a scenario can have the players sitting around for hours wondering if this is a diversion. In addition, and here I am probably being far too utopian in my requirements, I have yet to see a Superhero rpg that can emulate the visual jokes with which the better comic artists brighten their work. When I wrote playtest scenarios I tried to think like a comic writer and, as a result, put in cameo appearances for Bruce Springsteen in one and Arthur Dent and Ford Prefect in another. Needless to say, the jokes fell flat without the visual element, but this did start me thinking about visual aids to games. The scenario pack artwork includes panels depicting events in the adventure. I found these snapshots of the scenes potentially useful in play, but I could hardly hand the scenario booklet around for the players to look at. Next time, TSR and Marvel, could we have some more of these drawings, and on separate sheets, please?

Pete Tamlyn

Product Information

The MARVEL SUPERHEROES™ game (£10.50) is supplied by TSR UK Ltd, The Mill, Rathmore Rd, Cambridge CB1 4AD
Champions supplements are from Chris Harvey Games, P O Box 100, Walsall, W Midlands, prices Champions II and III £7.95 and Deathstroke and Enemies I £4.95
Toon (£7.95) is a Steve Jackson game, distributed in Britain by Games Workshop, 27-29 Sunbeam Rd, London NW10.
These addresses are for information only; all games should be available in your local games shop.

TOON

Steve Jackson Games have always been known for producing innovative, and above all, amusing new games systems. They have succeeded once again with **Toon**, a game which breaks out of all the genres currently invented for roleplaying games, and creates one of its own.

Toon is the game of the Saturday morning American cartoon series, and draws on Hanna Barbera and Warner Brothers cartoons for its background. Gone are the usual cultures and serious attitude of most frp systems — here the emphasis is on Fun with a big F.

The game comes as a single rulebook, profusely illustrated with cartoons and pictures of cartoon-type characters — giving examples for each section of the rules. Characters are created with just four characteristics: Muscle, Zip, Smarts and Chutzpah. These are roughly equivalent to Strength, Speed, Intelligence and 'pushiness'. Each character also has a rating in one of the 23 skills available, which vary from running to breaking down doors, taking in driving and fighting on the way.

The whole atmosphere of the game is very close to that of the cartoon background. The action is controlled by a GM who is referred to as the Animator. Each scenario is referred to as a cartoon, and characters attempt to win plot points through their actions. These actions are mainly to cause the other player characters to 'fall down'.

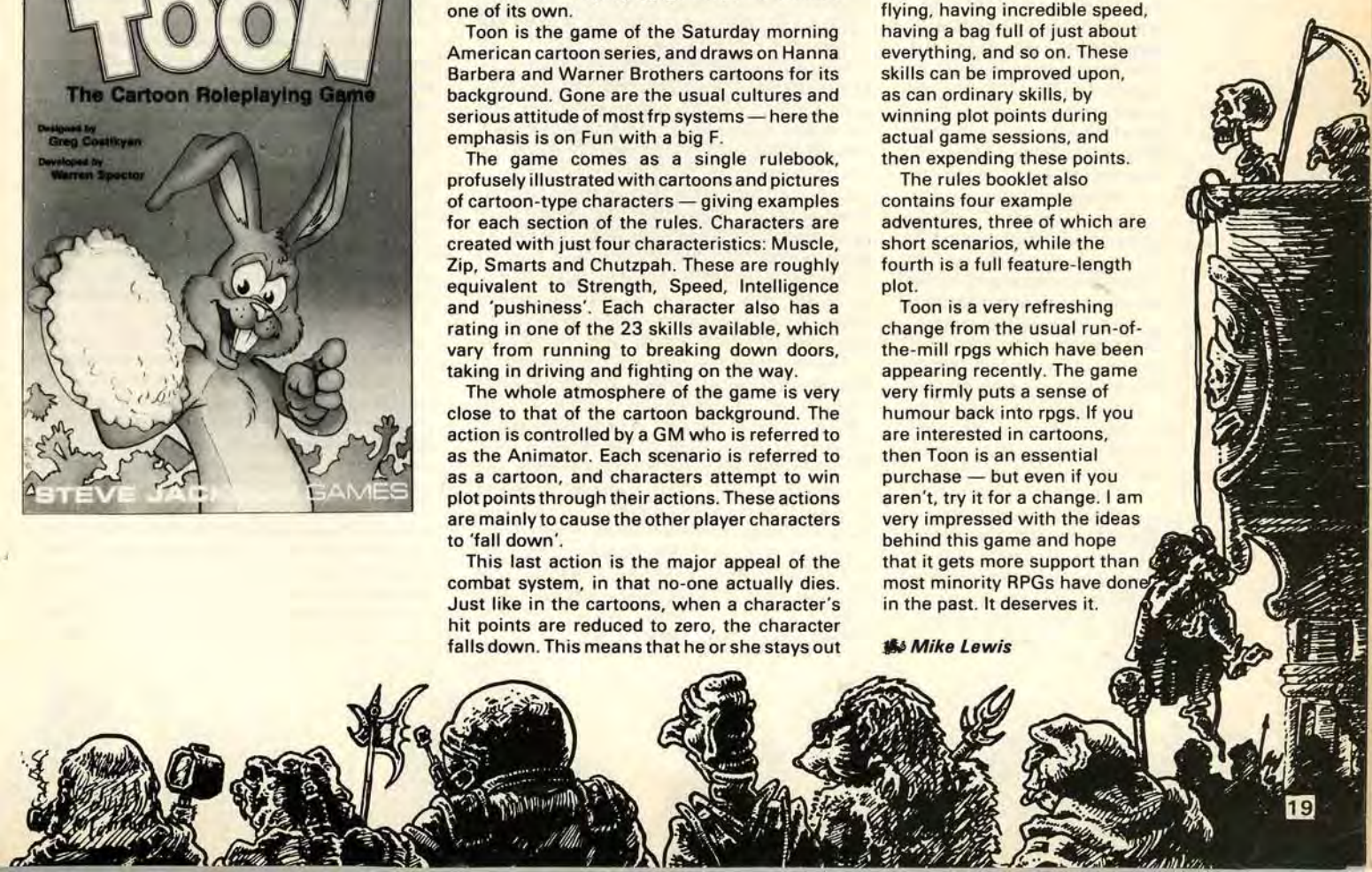
This last action is the major appeal of the combat system, in that no-one actually dies. Just like in the cartoons, when a character's hit points are reduced to zero, the character falls down. This means that he or she stays out of the action for three minutes, and then returns with full hps.

Each character not only has ordinary skills, but they may have special skills and abilities as well. This enables characters to carry out all those cartoon tricks such as flying, having incredible speed, having a bag full of just about everything, and so on. These skills can be improved upon, as can ordinary skills, by winning plot points during actual game sessions, and then expending these points.

The rules booklet also contains four example adventures, three of which are short scenarios, while the fourth is a full feature-length plot.

Toon is a very refreshing change from the usual run-of-the-mill rpgs which have been appearing recently. The game very firmly puts a sense of humour back into rpgs. If you are interested in cartoons, then Toon is an essential purchase — but even if you aren't, try it for a change. I am very impressed with the ideas behind this game and hope that it gets more support than most minority RPGs have done in the past. It deserves it.

Mike Lewis



Notices

JUSTICE INC

Hero Games' **Justice Inc** is a game about the pulps — the rip-roaring adventure stories of the 30s and 40s. It consists of two rulebooks packaged in a good-looking box. The rulebooks themselves are well laid out and illustrated, as we expect from professional games nowadays.

The larger of the two books covers character creation, combat and skills. The rule system is that used in all Hero games, the most popular of which is **Champions**. What sets Champions-based systems apart from virtually every other system on the market is their total flexibility in character generation. There are no dice used to create a character; instead players must assign character points to determine their attributes and skills. This takes a little time and thought, but at least ensures that you get to play exactly the character you want.

The combat system is designed to give an authentic feel, and hence is moderately complex, though since it is based on the same system as the rest of the rules this shouldn't be too much of a problem. What is worrying, though, is the way it is explained. Most of the description is clear and easily understandable, but at times it seems to assume that the reader already plays Champions. The rules also assume a fair amount of knowledge on the subject of firearms. I should stress that these features are irritants only — any competent player could sort out the rules. They do mean, however, that I wouldn't recommend this game for novices.

Skills are handled in an admirably straightforward manner, and a good selection of Skills, Psychic Powers and Weird Talents is given. One omission of note is the lack of a system for Occultism/Black Magic, something that featured prominently in the pulps and would be important for a Lovecraft-inspired campaign.

The campaign sourcebook in a game like this will compete directly with the equivalent in **Call of Cthulhu**. Justice Inc is a fine attempt, making it clear that the game is designed to have a wider scope than Cthulhu. However, I believe the designers have made a mistake in following the Champions line and ignoring money. Nowhere in the rules are prices for equipment, costs, etc given; the only word on the subject suggests that the GM use one tenth of current (dollar) prices. This must be held against the game when considering its overall merit.

If you like the Champions rules system, and want a campaign set in the era of the pulps, then Justice Inc will be perfect for you. Otherwise I'm afraid I can't recommend it over its competition.

Paul Mason

The Adventures of INDIANA JONES

Roleplaying games based on film/TV series seem to be the current craze in the industry, presumably because games companies want to reach new markets, and fans of films are easiest to reach. I mention this because it is clear the **The Adventures of Indiana Jones** is pitched at a level understandable to the complete novice.

The presentation is slick, with numerous stills from the films being used to break up the text of the single rulebook. The main strength of the rules lies in the system used. The designers have come up with an ingenious way of combining chance with success, quality of result and (in the case of combat) hit locations with a single percentage roll. The whole game depends on this simple system, making it easy to pick up quickly.

However, while the rules system is extremely elegant, the game falls down in virtually every other department. The first problem is that there is no character generation system; players must choose from the roles of Indy, Marion Ravenwood, Sallah, Jock Lindsay, Wu Han, Willie Scott and Short Round. If you think about those characters you will realise what a ludicrous idea it is to limit players to them. Sallah, for example, is clearly not the kind of person to go gallivanting round the world in search of adventure. What is more, the designers have persisted in the TSR notion of play balance, hence Indy himself is the weakest of the adult males offered as characters.

Another major flaw is that while the brawling system works well and feels true to the films, the shooting system is feeble. It takes at least three good shots to kill a man, and the chances are that a single shot will have no effect on the person it hits, even if the shot is from a high velocity rifle. All this rather spoils the introductory adventure, much of which depends on Indy being threatened at gunpoint. Under this system there is no threat!

The adventure is presented in episodes throughout the booklet, which causes much frantic page flipping on the part of the GM, especially as the scenario isn't very clearly laid out. The first part of the adventure is a solo scenario. It is not well written, forsaking the usual numbered paragraph system for flowing prose in which you have to read through the various alternatives to find the one you selected. This would really spoil it were it not for the fact that the same things happen whatever you choose to do.

This demonstrates how, while the game structure is spot on, the execution is poor, making me feel overall that the game is a missed opportunity.

Paul Mason

CALL OF CTHULHU Scenarios

Imagination makes the good scenario. With it, any number of faults may be overlooked; without it, the most detailed adventures are merely grey. It is in this light that I judge the following...

First, two TOME scenarios. **Death in Dunwich** sees the players employed to investigate the brutal murder of an art dealer. The adventure is easy to run, plays well, and has a nice balance between thoughtful sleuthing and fast action.

Unfortunately, there are two major failings. Firstly, DiD is very short. For £7 you expect more than this single-facet plot. Secondly, the atmosphere is wrong. DiD, one feels, is more influenced by low-budget horror films than by Lovecraft. What use is a Cthulhu supplement where the paranormal is the flaw of the story?! Overall, I'm afraid, the adventure left me cold.

The Arkham Evil was also disappointing, though for different reasons. This time the plot was intriguing, but out of control. Druidic rituals, terrorist miners, fated asteroids and unlikely German barons just don't tie together. Result? Contrivance on a massive scale. The players are bundled from scene to scene like puppets, reeling as unexplained 'happenings' bombard them from every side... A pity, since many scenes were potentially quite interesting.

To sum up, I think DiD and Arkham Evil were valuable when **Call of Cthulhu** was new; they filled the gap when there was nothing else. Now, I suspect, they are outclassed.

Which leads to two Chaosium offerings. Firstly, **Curse of the Cthonians**, a package boasting four separate scenarios. It may sound like quantity not quality, but it isn't.

Curse begins with 'Dark Carnival', which appeals because of its setting: all the veuve and colour of an amusement arcade. The plot never reaches beyond cliché, but that doesn't matter. Here the enjoyment is roleplaying in odd surroundings, not 'what happens next'.

The second adventure succeeds because of the sensitive portrayal of its lead characters. A famed archaeologist limping his way to madness under the curse of a Tibetan god... Keeper manipulation is subtle and ingenious as the players meet the daughter and friends of this tragic figure. Despite the contrived ending, this is a most memorable scenario.

And so to the last duo, by William Hamblin, which offer the investigators the ambience of legend-filled Egypt. The action begins with mystery surrounding the theft of an ancient ceremonial dagger. Again, believable NPCs and clever twists in the plot manipulate the party quietly but inexorably along the desired path... The distinctive quality of Hamblin's work is his knowledge of things occult. Genuine heiroglyphics and kabbalistic riddles prove very effective in conjuring up atmosphere. Street-life in teeming Cairo should prove interesting too!

The presentation of **Curse** is exemplary. The layout is neat and logical, the artwork relevant,

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and the texts very well written. Really, there is little to fault, unless it be the potential deadlines of some of the finales. All in all, if one-off scenarios are your thing, Curse is a must.

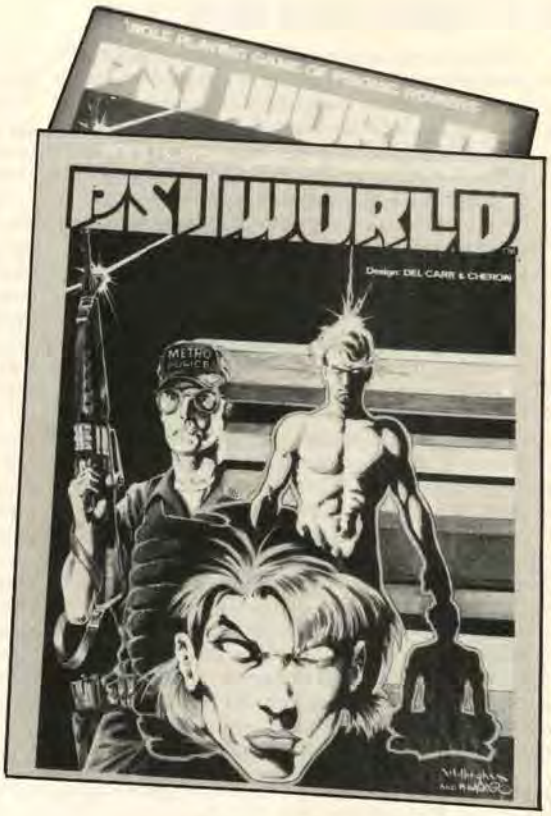
What **The Fungi from Yuggoth** promises, though, is more than just a scenario: it is the basis for a whole campaign. A very ambitious plot too, though of course I can only hint at it.

A famous New York spiritualist goes missing — but what could his strange dreams have told the players anyway? The trail leads to Boston and a series of hideous child-murders. Slowly, it becomes apparent that there is some deep evil afoot, far more than any mere kidnapping. The players are drawn to Transylvania, Egypt and Peru before the truth begins to emerge...

Fungi employs with great effect the CoC 'onion-skin' method of layout. From routine beginnings, the players become embroiled in occurences more and more macabre until almost any horror seems possible. Once more, it is not Chaosium's impeccable technique which shines, but their conviction. Weird and worldly, simple or sinister, their NPCs *live*. They contrive to make Lovecraft's horrific worlds rather too close for comfort...

To conclude, Curse and Fungi are worthy supplements indeed: well-detailed and original. With Call of Cthulhu so capably documented and now so reasonably priced, the world of Twenties style and pulp-fiction atmosphere must loom as a considerable threat to the more conventional RPGs.

Richard Lee



Product Information

Justice Inc (£13.75) from Hero games is distributed in this country by Chris Harvey Games;

Indiana Jones is a TSR game costing £9.50; The TOME (£6.95 each) and Chaosium scenarios (£7.95 each) for the **Call of Cthulhu** game are distributed by Games Workshop;

Psi World is an FGU game supplied in the UK by Games of Liverpool, 85-7 Victoria Street, Liverpool L1 6DG. Price — £8.75.

PSI WORLD

Psi World, the latest of a long line of role-playing games from FGU, is somewhat refreshing in as much as one (or one's party) is not pitted against a multitude of real and/or fantasy creatures. Friends and adversaries are human, the time is now and the settings realistic of small town USA.

Included in the standard size FGU box are two booklets — rules and scenarios — a GM's shield and a single card character sheet which you are expected to photocopy. The production and printing of all these is top quality with a layout designed for clarity.

There is a very short introduction to the game idea, but not the system, as Book One — the rules — gets straight into character creation, skills, psionics, combat and the world. Each section is clearly defined with boxed examples for an 'assumed' character being available to add weight to the rules where necessary.

Basically, the World is divided into two peoples — Normals or 'norms' as they are called, and Psis or Psionics. Players take the part of either a norm or a Psi and attempt to live in this world where Psis are hunted almost as relentlessly as Hitler pursued the Jews. This is not a light comparison as much of the game system seems to rely heavily on the Jewish persecution and the similar American attitude towards the ethnic races of their country. Psis are forced to live 'undercover' or in ghettos, while a Ku Klux Klan force — 'the League' — is dedicated to ridding the world of them completely. Players can find themselves in moral realistic situations with the fact that this is 'just a game' being lost among the heated conflict of personal opinions.

The two scenarios in the adventure booklet are very basic, being intended only to introduce players to both aspects of play, but there is so much possible additional material available in today's real world for any GM to intensify each situation to suit his/her own knowledge of life as it is.

Bringing the game back into unreality are the Psionic Powers available to Psis, which range from Telepathy to Telekinesis and are thus a constant reminder that this is, after all, a game.

I would suggest that this is a system for the slightly more mature player, not for the young and blood-thirsty beat-'em-up brigade. Much thought and planning is required by both GM and player, and character interaction and party co-operation is a must for survival and enjoyment.

Chris Baylis

Notices

RINGWORLD

Chaosium's new science fiction roleplaying game **Ringworld** has a background derived from Larry Niven's award-winning *Known Space* novels. Known Space is large; the roleplaying game centres on the Ringworld of the title, a huge artificial construct built aeons ago by a race called the Pak, creating a narrow strip of land all the way around a star. One of the major tasks of the adventurers is to discover some of the secrets of the Ringworld's design.

The game is immaculately presented and produced. The box art is striking, and the interior artwork easily matches that on the cover. The four books which comprise the game include a Game Masters Guide, Explorers Guide, and material on Technology and Creatures; about 150 pages of information.

Ringworld's physical systems rely heavily on other Chaosium products. The character generation system is similar to that used in **Call of Cthulhu**. It places a lot of responsibility on the player or 'explorer'; as one cannot be master of all trades, this system needs thought and co-operation if a suitably balanced party is to be the end result. The combat system is basically that used in **RuneQuest**. Thus there is little to fault what must be one of the better melee systems in common usage. A word of warning however: melees can become very different once you replace ancient weapons with modern and futuristic missile weapons. Combat ranges expand considerably, and missile hits become deadly. It is very difficult to protect an explorer to the extent that even an average range shot doesn't bring him down. This tendency is exaggerated by the science fiction background. No SF medical technology is a match for fantasy **healing** or **resurrection** spells. So combat must be kept to a minimum.

A problem for the Game Master is the sheer size of the ring, it is literally millions of miles around. It is broken into hexagons, a third of a million of them. Each hex is 50,000 km across — if a party marched 30km a day it would take them 40 years to cross one hex. Yet there are rapid transit systems available, which poses a dilemma: do you design one area in detail or many superficially? The playing area of Ringworld is the largest yet to face the roleplayer, and this vastness may dwarf the players. They need a lot of guidance to feel that they are actually having an effect on the campaign.

Another problem is maintenance of a science fiction atmosphere. Because of the Ringworld discovered Pak artifacts may take on the appearance of 'magic items'. Furthermore the entire population of Ringworld was transplanted there. Thus the numerous types of creatures that you meet are diverse and in many cases very odd. It may be that if the game is not properly regulated these creatures may be treated as fantasy monsters. Thus Ringworld needs some skill on the part of the Game Master, it is definitely not for the novice.

One way round this is to set the campaign in another part of known space. Quite a lot of background is given of Known Space, its history and some of the worlds are described at length. In such a campaign many of the intelligent races of the Niven books could interact on a personal and political level in a way that is difficult on the Ringworld. However, there might be problems; for instance, there is no space combat system because on the Ringworld you simply don't need one. The characters' ship is down and heavily damaged. Also, one would waste much of the background information presented, information that you pay a substantial amount of money for.

Altogether, Ringworld's advantages and disadvantages stem from its campaign setting. The actual mechanics of the game are top quality, yet background and atmosphere are what make or break a campaign, and in Ringworld this aspect could be somewhat daunting to the uninitiated.

Steve Nutt

Ringworld is a Chaosium game from Games Workshop costing £24.95
Westminster (£9.95), H P Gibson & Sons, Littlers Close, London SW19; **Poleconomy** (£10.99) is a Woodrush game, available from all leading department stores; **The President** is from Merad Games, 155 Ecclesall Road South, Sheffield, and costs £14.95
Torchlight Fantasy Products are at 23 Clifftown Rd, Southend on Sea, Essex
X5 costs £4.50 from TSR UK Ltd

WESTMINSTER, POLECONOMY & THE

If boardgames are your thing, Xmas is the time when you might be dropping the heaviest hints about which one you want to receive. For anyone with an interest in politics, this is a year when you find yourself spoilt for choice, for there are three games with an political slant, all of which were on show at Games Day in September. Which one do you go for — assuming you persuade someone to buy one for you in the first place?

The three games share little in common beyond their area of interest. **Westminster** (Gibson Games) is the oldest of the three, previewed at Games Day '83. The game presents an abstracted look at the workings of the British parliamentary system, and the aim of the players is to be the first to pass a Bill through three stages of the legislative process — First Reading, Committee and Second Reading. The board shows the chamber of the House of Commons, a 'track', about which the MPs move, and an outer ring of constituencies and 'chance' squares. Seats are contested in an opening general election (in which a maximum of 16 seats will be won), and in by-elections which allow for fortunes to change. While it is possible for players to co-operate in the First Reading, thereafter it is a case of dog-eat-dog.

It is not a simulation game; should the players get to the stage where a second general election is called, it will take no account of the existing distribution of seats among the parties, and all the players will fight it as equals — even the Communists! It's a race game, with a neat theme and a fairly simple set of rules. As such, it is very easy to play, and there is sufficient need for intelligent play that good players will triumph over the not-so-good.

With **Poleconomy** (Woodrush Games), it's not the election that matters, it's how you use the power. This is Monopoly with state interference; less a case of the Free Market Economy regulating itself, than of it being tampered with by those with the power, so that wealth flows freely — into the right pockets. It is possible to play this as a straight Buy Properties, Charge Rent, Make Money game, but the extra dimension of elections and government bring it much closer to the real thing. The elections themselves are pretty dull, although the bartering and haggling over government seats can be entertaining with four or more players, but once you're in power.... Manipulating inflation, government bonds and government salaries means that even if you have lost out in the scramble to buy properties, you are still in with a chance. The board is very attractive and the packaging is excellent, so this looks like a game that could be a winner. But watch out — there is a serious flaw in the rules, whereby the player in last place can force a drawn game by bankrupting the government. Indeed, in a game where players are being cautious and keeping the amount of cash in front of them at a minimum (which limits the government's ability to tax) it's very hard not to bankrupt the country.

Back at the electoral stakes, we move to America and **The President** (Merad Design Games). Here the object is to become the next president of the USA, by winning the nomination of a party, making sure of maximum exposure on radio, TV and in the Press, and then winning the election itself. It must be said that Merad does itself no favours by publishing

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Torchlight DUNGEON MODELS

There was a white postcard waiting for me, telling me that the postman had been unable to deliver a parcel. Enjoyable speculation ensued. Who normally sends me parcels? Why, Paul at IMAGINE of course. Down at the sorting office, sure enough, tastefully designed, brown TSR sticky tape emblazoned the jiffy bag. Hello, hello; this parcel's contents rattle in an enticing manner! Could it be I've been sent some interesting, shiny toy soldiers to review for a change? A quick look inside and..... oh dear, ooh dear, what's this? The poor man's editorial responsibilities have finally crazed him. He's gone and sent me a jiffy bag full of false teeth moulds! How very sad.

Happily, closer examination reveals that I have utterly mistaken the nature of the contents. They are in fact two examples of Torchlight Productions' Dungeon modules, one of which has broken into three parts. Thus an important feature of these items is revealed in the process of transmitting them from editor to reviewer. Unless packed extremely carefully, they will break.

For those who have not seen Torchlight's products, a bit of explanation. They are 3D models of dungeon rooms and corridors, made from an off-white resin. The latest examples are produced with walls fixed to floors unlike the originals which required gluing. This one-piece construction is supposed to make them stronger but the inherent brittleness of the material will, apparently, still assert itself in moments of stress such as Royal Mail custody.

They are undoubtedly nice models. The sample I was sent is 8" x 8" and depicts a room fallen into ruin and littered with treasure and skeletons. Good detail and very attractive when painted up. By the way — follow the advice given in the accompanying leaflet concerning the painting. I didn't and was rewarded with a disappointing result initially, which required about five times more work to rescue it than if I'd used the staining technique suggested. Actually, the instructions given, while perfectly adequate for plain rooms, were inadequate for beginners to tackle a piece with as much detail as the one I looked at.

The fundamental question to be asked of 3D dungeon models is 'are they of any use?' I wonder. They certainly look good and would, for example, make beautiful sets for photographs. They would also make excellent settings for a game restricted to the small area that, say, four or five rooms and interconnecting corridor would afford. But for a free-ranging dungeon exploring RPG? I doubt their utility in such a context. The number of pieces required to reflect accurately the variety in size and shape of the area of an average dungeon would be prohibitively expensive. In fact, even to attempt to use them in such a role, I would suggest drawing the dungeon plans to fit in with your available Torchlight models rather than vice versa.

In summary, these are excellent models, rather fragile in some circumstances and with limited appeal to those who wish to play D&D in extensive and varied settings.

Doug Cowie

PRESIDENT

one of the most incomprehensible rulebooks I've ever read, but perseverence shows this to be another race game, where hitting the right squares at the right time is the key to success. The luck element in The President is stronger than in the other two games, which might make it more acceptable for family play, but the theme is more likely to be a hinderance to sales in the UK than a help.

So, as Acting Returning Officer on this review, it's my duty to tell you that the candidates among the Election games fared as follows: WESTMINSTER, with its jigsaw-type board, plastic playing pieces and cards is good value for money, simple and entertaining to play and should suit most people apart from those hoping for a genuine simulation of the government process; POLECONOMY is a lavish, excellent reproduction of an old game-playing theme, with the right balance of player interaction and selfishness to sharpen up the diplomatic skills, and a higher difficulty level. THE PRESIDENT lacks the polish of the others, and has a rulebook that reads as well as any political manifesto. I think the first two will comfortably share out the votes between them, neither gaining a majority. The President, I'm afraid, lost its deposit.

Paul Cockburn

X5 — TEMPLE OF DEATH

The D&D expert module **Temple of Death** is intended as a sequel to X4 — **Master of the Desert Nomads**. It invites a party of 6-10th level characters to enter the country ruled by the evil Master, find his stronghold, and 'Make your own decision' about what to do once there.

The module will take the players through the mountains via the Great Pass — a combination of tunnels and villages. The party will then descend into the enemy land of Thule and across it to the master's headquarters beyond the Dark Wood. Combinations of Random Encounter tables and pre-generated encounters are used. Several of these are quite testing, and there are about half a dozen new monsters.

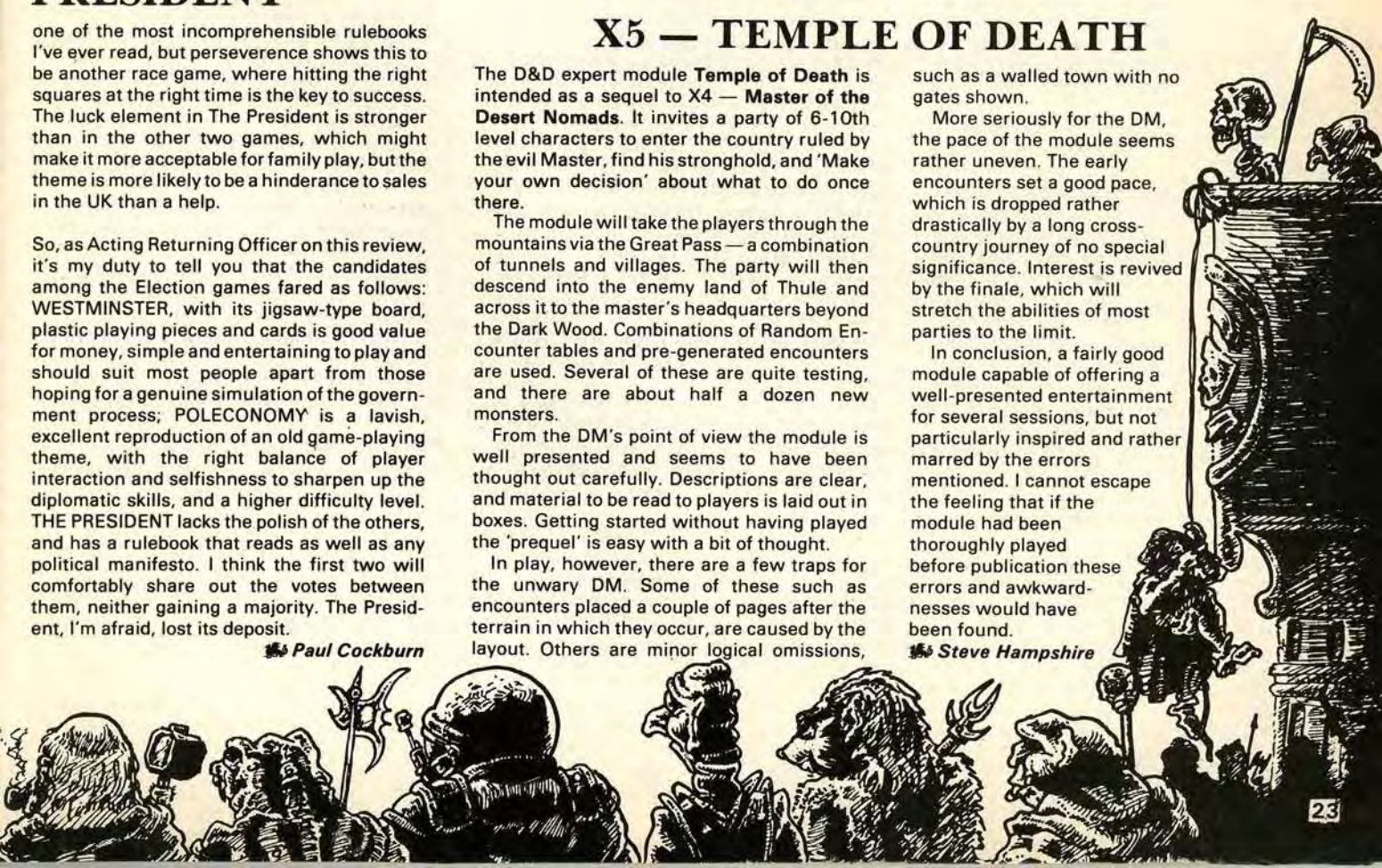
From the DM's point of view the module is well presented and seems to have been thought out carefully. Descriptions are clear, and material to be read to players is laid out in boxes. Getting started without having played the 'prequel' is easy with a bit of thought.

In play, however, there are a few traps for the unwary DM. Some of these such as encounters placed a couple of pages after the terrain in which they occur, are caused by the layout. Others are minor logical omissions, such as a walled town with no gates shown.

More seriously for the DM, the pace of the module seems rather uneven. The early encounters set a good pace, which is dropped rather drastically by a long cross-country journey of no special significance. Interest is revived by the finale, which will stretch the abilities of most parties to the limit.

In conclusion, a fairly good module capable of offering a well-presented entertainment for several sessions, but not particularly inspired and rather marred by the errors mentioned. I cannot escape the feeling that if the module had been thoroughly played before publication these errors and awkwardnesses would have been found.

Steve Hampshire



Notices Games Review

ULTRAFORCE

This is a two-scenario module designed for use with most Auto Combat games and games systems currently available. It is of especial use to players of **Battlecars**, as within its pages are three well-designed new vehicle cards and the necessary coloured playing pieces to go with them.

The Ultraforce of the title is a kind of vehicular 'A' team, and within the scenarios you are invited to set up your own Ultraforce team to combat the rebellious **Sword of the Lord** adversaries. Unfortunately there are no rules for compiling the 'stats' of your driver/characters despite the bold announcement on the module cover that **AutoVentures** are *roleplaying* adventure supplements.

The Ultraforce background along with descriptions of the World: 2012 and the American Southeast make considerable role-playing material, and the inclusion of non-player characters aid the creation of player-scenario ideas, but without an RPG system to back them up they are unnecessary space-fillers.

Mad Max fans will surely recognise the thoughts behind Scenario One, **The Juggernaut**, as it is more than similar to the climax of the movie **Mad Max 2** with assorted bikers converging on the armed tanker. In this case it is the Ultraforce skyborne cycles versus the Sword of the Lord heavily weaponed Juggernaut — great fun!

Scenario Two is a basic ambush with the Sword of the Lord boys attempting to gain their revenge.

Completing the module is a Quick Combat System for use if you don't happen to have the necessary game system at hand, but in truth the adventures do work better with the proper rules being used.

I don't see **Battlecars** or **Car Wars** as roleplaying games, more as supplements to other already available adventures or campaigns, and therefore am in two minds as to the intrinsic value of the Ultraforce module. It is in no way a necessity for auto-combat gaming but might awaken some latent ideas in players bored with the routine run of play.

Chris Baylis

PI-BALLED

for the 48k Spectrum

If you know any other programs in the **Pi-man** series by Automata and you know the arcade game **Qbert**, then there is no need to read this review — you already know everything there is to say about this game. It is a straightforward Spectrum adaptation of the arcade original in which you are Bert and have to change the colours of the cubes in a pyramid by leaping from block to block while avoiding miscellaneous descending nasties. Each level changes the colours and adds to the creatures out to get you, making quite an attractive game, fun to play, with very good graphics and excellent control — a standard Automata seems to adhere to.

While I cannot imagine a better implementation of this game for the Spectrum I cannot see any other reason why readers of this magazine should be interested in it, as it has no FRP or adventure content whatsoever. If you are one of the sufferers of Pimania, which is a very original adventure, do not be misled into thinking that this is a follow-up. Automata are clearly trying to use the popularity of their first big success to sell very different kinds of games. If you want another fast action, eyestraining, fingerbreaking activity, you'll enjoy this, but if it is your mind or imagination that needs the exercise, forget it.

Noel Williams

DAEMON SPAWN OF THE MYATHLON CULT

Daemon Spawn of the Myathlon Cult is a fantasy adventure from Mystic Arts Publications of Essex, designed by Rod Stevenson. So far as I am aware it is the first effort from both designer and publisher.

Physically it is an A4, 12-page booklet with a loose, thin card cover on the inside of which are printed plans of the two major encounter areas. The front cover is to a standard about equal to that of the better sort of fanzine. The booklet itself is also reminiscent of a fanzine. It is not typeset, the grammar and punctuation are innovative, and the spelling is quite appalling. Anyone producing a written work of any sort, who cannot be bothered to consult a dictionary from time to time, is treating his readers with something like contempt.

This adventure is intended for 'starter characters'. I am unsure whether that means new characters of experienced players or new characters of new players. Either way it is intended for 6-8 characters of 1st to 3rd level. Certainly I would not recommend it to novice referees; too much is required of the adjudicator in the way of filling in details and bridging gaps in the narrative. A lot of this work is the inevitable result of the otherwise laudable feature of making the adventure suitable for any rules system.

The adventure has three sections, each of which details an encounter area. First off there are some high jinks at the Rakshar Monastery. The players find themselves at this place in search of a rare herb required to heal a sick colleague. That's fair enough reason to get the adventurers into the first section, although the links between this and the subsequent encounters are a little weak. Section Two sees the players on a wilderness trip with suitable hazards of both a random and planned nature. The culmination of the module occurs at the interesting Myathlon Crypt of the Atoll Temple which a skilled referee should be able to run as a perfectly respectable dungeon trip.

And that is **Daemon Spawn of the Myathlon Cult**. Only twelve pages long but not devoid of merit. It has good background and the encounter areas are interesting and challenging. Sadly it is in urgent need of development and proofreading. The linking narrative between the encounters is lightweight, necessitating more work for the referee who, after working out all the stats for whichever system she is using, must by now be wondering why she didn't just run one of her own adventures. Furthermore, in the interests of economy, two maps have been edited from the package — draw them yourself, the designer suggests!

The price is the saviour of Daemon Spawn. At around £1.60 (direct sales) it is worth buying for the three encounter areas if you are short of ideas or time in your own campaign. All purchasers will have to be prepared to do the development work that the publisher should have done before offering this product for sale.

Doug Cowie

Product Information

Ultraforce, from Auto Combat, is distributed by Games Workshop
Pi-Balled, for the 48k Spectrum, is from Automata UK Ltd, 65a Osborne Road, Portsmouth, Hants.
Daemon Spawn... costs £1.60 from The Flat, Boarded Barns Farm, Fyfield Road, Ongar, Essex

For Captain Britain™, the trouble begins as a re-match with one of his earliest foes....
....but is all as it seems?

by Paul Cockburn

An Adventure for the MARVEL SUPERHEROES™ Game

Introduction

This is an adventure for the **MARVEL SUPERHEROES™** game, designed for a Games master (GM) and one player (using Captain Britain as a character). It can be easily adapted for more players. Complete statistics for Captain Britain are on page 40 of this magazine. Should more heroes be required, additional players should use characters from the **MARVEL SUPERHEROES** boxed set — no statistics for other Heroes are included here. In a two player (plus GM) game, the use of Captain Marvel as the second character is recommended. The GM should note that where more Heroes are involved, the encounters in this adventure may need altering to give a sufficient challenge.

The adventure is divided into seven chapters. The first six chapters of the adventure set out the main episodes, and are further divided into Campaign, Battle, and Aftermath sections. Chapter Seven provides statistics for all the major characters in the adventure.

The GM should note that if the one-player option is being used, Captain Britain could be beaten by unlucky die rolls at several points during the adventure. The GM should not be afraid to give the good Captain some help (but without making life too easy) if it looks as if he will fall victim to bad luck. Don't forget that what seems impossible in real life is meat and drink to your average hero, and complete defeat should be very rare indeed (and even then it should just set the scene for an amazing come-back against the odds). If the villain is winning hands down, don't forget the "gloat factor", which has been the undoing of many a bad guy in the past, and if the Captain is stuck in a situation from which it is impossible to escape — let him make a FEAT roll anyway.

Games Master's Overview

It has been a while since the Earth was directly involved in the Skrull-Kree war, but that doesn't alter the fact that there are many aliens on both sides who remember the importance of the planet. The **Super-Skrull™** is one such, and he has formulated a plan that will not only give him vengeance on his enemies in our world, but may also tilt the balance of the galactic conflict permanently in the Skrulls' favour.

The Super-Skrull has spent a great deal of time infiltrating the Kree's intelligence services, using his Shape-Shifting power to disguise himself as a member of the command echelons of the Kree military establishment. At last, his efforts have been rewarded. Captain Kay-tell — as he is known to the Kree — has been given command of a new elite unit, the Kree Intelligence Special Squad (K.I.S.S.), equipped with the latest military and scientific hardware. Aboard their mothership, the loyal and unquestioning KISS troopers have travelled to Earth, little realising that they are the unwitting pawns of his plan.

The plan is simple. The Super-Skrull has told the KISS soldiers that they are to carry out a series of terror attacks on Earth, which will paralyse the planet in preparation for a full-scale invasion. What he hasn't told them is that he hopes this will cause Earth to ally with the Skrulls in order to destroy the Kree. With Earth's Superheroes on their side, the Skrulls could easily win the war with the Kree, and then turn on their allies — leaving themselves supreme in the Galaxy once and for all!

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Chapter 1:

A WINDY DAY IN LONDON TOWN...

Campaign

Brian Braddock (Captain Britain) is visiting London as the adventure begins.

> You are walking across St James' Park, watching the people milling about by the lake, when a dark shadow falls across them. Looking up, you see an incredible sight — a sleek, silent vessel is drifting downwards, causing the people to run in panic from beneath its bulk. The ship settles upon the ground, and there is a moment of tense anticipation among the terrified crowds.
>
> With a hiss, a door opens in the side of the vessel, and a tall figure rushes out, soaring suddenly into the air with a sound of rushing air. The woman beside you screams in alarm "What are they...?"
>
> A blast of air sweeps you across the ground and you recognise your assailant in that moment — from out of your past, Hurricane has come to battle you again.

In fact, Braddock's assailant is not his old adversary, but a Kree warrior — a member of the KISS team. Braddock has been deceived by an apparatus mounted behind the cockpit of the Kree landing craft — the AugMENT device — a key part of the Super-Skrull's plan.

The Kree developed the AugMENT device for use with their special units who are always outnumbered in combat. AugMENT has two effects upon its victims. First, it penetrates the subconscious of opponents' minds, and draws an amplified sense of terror from them. The victim(s) will see, hear and feel something which is a hundred times more powerful than any actual attack. In this instance AugMENT causes the ordinary passer-by in St James' Park to see scores of blue-skinned alien soldiers laying waste to the area instead of just one.

The second effect is a powerful imprint on the memory — no matter what actually occurs afterwards, the people in St James' Park will remain convinced that they saw hundreds of aliens, and that there was tremendous destruction and loss of life. The memory will be confused and imprecise, but the effect will be inescapable — all will believe that the attack to have been fantastically more damaging than it actually was. Absolute proof to the contrary will only confuse the victim unless a red Reason FEAT roll is made.

The AugMENT device causes these effects at up to Unearthly range. The only protection is a special helmet which carries signal filters. The Kree soldier is wearing such a helmet.

For Brian Braddock the effect is distorted. As soon as the Kree warrior operated his jet thrusters, it triggered a memory in Braddock's mind of his previous fight with **Hurricane™**. The GM should treat the fight with the KISS trooper exactly as if it were a fight with Hurricane — no matter if it is illusion, it is very real to Captain Britain. The stats in Chapter 7 have been designed just as if it were the Supervillain himself; the GM should give no clue during the fight that it is in any way odd.

Battle

The GM should draw up a map similar to the outdoor map provided in the MARVEL SUPERHEROES boxed set. The Kree ship and "Hurricane" should be placed in the middle of a park, with members of the public around. Brian Braddock should be placed at least two areas away.

Braddock's first problem is that he is still in the guise of his secret identity, and he needs to be able to make the change to Captain Britain away from spectators. If the player asks, the GM should indicate a location two areas away (and not in the direction of the spacecraft!) where he can make the change unseen.

"Hurricane" will apparently spend two rounds summoning up a mini-hurricane to unleash upon the members of the public (they will believe themselves to be under fire from alien weapons). This will start before Captain Britain can hide, change and rush his opponent. The Captain will not be able to penetrate the winds, but must enter through the eye of the mini-hurricane. As soon as he makes an attack on "Hurricane", Captain Britain will be the sole victim of attacks until the combat is over.

Aftermath

If Captain Britain is defeated, "Hurricane" will turn his attention back to the destruction of the immediate area. His main target will be Buckingham Palace, which will be utterly destroyed. By the time the Captain can recover, the spacecraft and its occupant will have departed.

If Captain Britain defeats "Hurricane", he will believe that he has beaten an old foe — a super-villain. When the police arrive, they and the general public will be convinced that they were attacked by blue-skinned aliens — hordes of them.

The GM should make a secret Intuition FEAT roll for Captain Britain. If the result is red, the Captain shakes off the effect of the AugMENT completely, and sees the Kree craft and soldier for what they are. If the result is a yellow FEAT, he will realise that something has tampered with his memory (or with the memories of scores of other people), but will not know what or how. The GM should repeat this die roll on each subsequent day until the Captain "remembers" exactly what happened.

The spacecraft will have been completely immobilised (with a Disabling Device that the Kree activated when he landed) before it can be investigated, and it (and the Kree soldier) will be taken into police custody. One day after its capture, the landing craft will be activated from the mother ship, and fly back into orbit.

After a long session with the Police, and a lot of badgering by the gentlemen of the Press, Captain Britain may leave the scene. No matter what he has said or done, the papers, TV and radio will carry lengthy news items about the attack — with horrendously exaggerated accounts of the damage and casualties. The news will also inform him that there

were five duplicate attacks in major cities around the world — New York, Moscow, Tokyo, Canberra and Brasilia. The other attacks caused vast damage before they came to an end.

If Captain Britain returns to his home, Braddock Manor, and uses the facilities there, or contacts SHIELD or another Superhero, he will learn that, all around the world, people are coming to one conclusion about the attack — that the Kree were responsible. The Captain may wonder if he is going mad.... or if ghosts are working with the Kree....

Karma

Captain Britain regains 30 health points at this point. He cannot have more Health points than he started with.

The Karma awards are in addition to those given in the Campaign Book.

Brian Braddock changes into Captain Britain in full view — further alarming the public	-10
Each round that "Hurricane" attacked the public unhampered	-20
"Hurricane" defeats Captain Britain and destroys Buckingham Palace	-all
Captain Britain insists to Police that they are wrong about "blue-skinned aliens"	-10
Captain Britain defeats "Hurricane"	+40
Captain Britain "humours" police theory	+20
Captain Britain helps ferry any injured to hospital	+10
Captain Britain talks nicely to the Press	+10

Chapter 2:

MAYHEM AT BRADDOCK MANOR!

Campaign

Wherever Captain Britain goes after his battle with "Hurricane", he will be monitored. The Super-Skrull watched the battle in St James' Park, and will use detection devices aboard the Kree mothership to keep track of Captain Britain's movements.

The Super-Skrull's first concern is that Captain Britain may have spotted some clue as to what is going on. He will know that the Captain believed he was fighting someone or something other than a Kree assault (he will know exactly who if the Captain called out his foe's name). The Super-Skrull also has an additional reason to be concerned and angry with Captain Britain if the Kree soldier was defeated — there are only six KISS troopers in his unit.

If Captain Britain goes to Braddock Manor, the next encounter will take place there. If he remains in London, or goes to another location, the GM should inform the Captain that he has received a mysterious message telling him that it is vitally important he returns to Braddock Manor. The message is from someone signing himself "Kay-tell". If the Captain makes a green Intuition FEAT roll, he will recognise "Kay-tell" as a Kree name.

The GM should also make an additional secret Intuition FEAT roll to see if the Captain has been able to recover his true "memory" of the events in St James' Park. The results of such a roll are the same as before.

The next encounter will take place outside Braddock Manor. A sleek spacecraft, identical to the one that landed in London, will land on the moor outside the house. A blue-skinned (seemingly unarmed) humanoid will step from the craft, and will wait for Captain Britain to appear.

The humanoid is the Super-Skrull himself, disguised as a Kree warrior. He has decided that his plan might be thwarted by anyone who was able to see through his disguise. He is specifically worried about the Kree warrior, Mar-vell, known on Earth as Captain Marvel; he has no idea that the Kree is dead. Since there is now a woman Superhero operating under the same name, he will hear reports of Captain Marvel on Earth wireless, and will be determined to destroy this "Kree menace".

He will approach Braddock Manor, and introduce himself as Kay-tell, Commander of the Kree Intelligence Special Squad. He will then tell the Captain why he has come to the manor:

> "Although we of the Kree have decided to end the independence of your petty little planet, we have no desire to destroy all of the humans on Earth. There will be survivors. If you are intelligent, you can be one of them.
>
> "We are not asking you to betray your fellow humans. In order to join those who will continue to live upon this planet under the domination of the Kree, all you have to do is to bring the warrior known as Captain Mar-vell to this place by this time tomorrow. Do not fail. I shall return at the appointed hour."

"Kay-tell" will then turn and enter his ship. The GM should make a secret Intuition FEAT roll for the Captain. If the result is red, the Captain will see something that will make him realise that the Kree warrior before him may be a disguise; a feint to disguise the true perpetrator of the Kree attacks.

If the Captain attacks "Kay-tell", the GM should proceed to the Battle section. If Captain Britain loses the fight, the Super-Skrull will still return the following day to see if Mar-vell has arrived.

After the Super-Skrull departs, the GM should make a Reason FEAT roll for Captain Britain. If a green result is achieved, Captain Britain will recall that the Kree warrior once known as **Captain Marvel** is dead, and that a female Superhero currently serving with the Avengers now uses the name. If the Feat Roll is failed, Captain Britain will have forgotten the original Captain Marvel and assume Kay-tell wants him to contact the Avenger.

Before the Super-Skrull's next visit, Captain Britain may try to contact Captain Marvel. This will be simple enough if he calls the Avengers' Mansion. She will happily come to his aid, but like everyone else she believes that the Kree are responsible for the attacks. If Captain Britain makes any attempt to persuade her otherwise she will reverse her decision, and remain in New York.

Captain Britain will recover 30 Health points at the end of the day after the Super-Skrull's first visit.

At this point the GM can introduce the other Heroes into the adventure if it is a multi-player game. Captain Marvel could be accompanied by whatever assortment of Superheroes are required. Before this, the GM could invent similar battles (in New York, etc) to Captain Britain's one in London for these heroes, although their opponents should be vast numbers of Kree soldiers armed with powerful weaponry. It is not advised that the GM give clues to any other player that this is anything other than an attack by the Kree.

Whether or not Captain Marvel comes to Braddock Manor, the Super-Skrull, still perfectly disguised as the Kree Commander Kay-tell, will arrive at the manor in his landing craft again on the following day. He will suffer no delay before demanding that Captain Britain bring Mar-vell out, and will be furious that the Kree warrior has not been produced, for he knows nothing of the female now using the Captain Marvel name. As soon as Captain Britain appears, he will curse angrily "Where is Mar-vell? You dare to defy me!" and he will attack.

Battle

No matter what heroes are present, the Super-Skrull's tactics will not vary. Throughout the battle, he will not use his powers, relying instead upon his strength and his Kree weaponry. He will battle the Captains Britain and Marvel (if she is present) and any other Hero(es) until they are unconscious or his Health drops below 100. If Super-Skrull's Health does drop below this limit he will use his power of **invisibility** and flee in his spacecraft.

Aftermath

In the unlikely event that the Super-Skrull is defeated, his disguise will disappear, and he will be revealed for what he is. The GM may wish to ensure that this ending does not occur by having the Super-Skrull escape no matter what. If Captain Britain makes a green Reason FEAT roll he will realise that the Super-Skrull (who he will automatically recognise) must be behind the Kree terror attacks. That will still leave the problem of the KISS warriors on the mothership, and the GM should proceed to section 5 and treat this as the last chapter in the story, possibly adding an escape by the Super-Skrull and a final, all-out, no-holds-barred scrap as the finale.

If, as is more likely, Captain Britain is defeated, the Super-Skrull will leave him, (and any companion Heroes) stretched out on the heather, in the mistaken belief that the Captain is incapable of further involvement.

However, in using his greatly amplified strength, the Super-Skrull will have left a clue for Captain Britain — and his invisibility power will be another if he used it to escape. The GM should make an Intuition FEAT roll for each of these clues. If the result is red, Captain Britain will realise that he is dealing with an opponent who is not of the Kree. If the Super-Skrull used the invisibility power, and this first FEAT Roll is successful the GM should make a second roll. If a yellow result is achieved, Captain Britain will suspect the involvement of the Super-Skrull.

Captain Britain will be unable to convince Captain Marvel (if she was present for the battle) or any other heroes that the Kree are not launching an all-out war upon the planet. She will not be swayed from this even if the Super-Skrull is unveiled. If Captain Marvel or any other Superhero is being run as a player-character, those characters should be allowed intuition rolls too.

Karma

Captain Britain (nor any other Hero involved in the battle) does not gain any Health points at the end of this chapter.

If the Super-Skrull defeats captain Britain	-20
If the Super-Skrull defeats him twice	-50
If Captain Britain fails to get Captain Marvel to help	-10
If Captain Britain defeats the Super-Skrull	+50
If Captain Britain's Reason unveils the Super-Skrull	+10

Chapter 3:

"I'LL BE JUDGE, I'LL BE JURY" SAYS CUNNING OLD FURY

Campaign

Some time after "Kay-tell's" visit, a second vessel will appear in the sky over Braddock Manor.

This time, however, it is the SHIELD helicarrier, the flying HQ of the law enforcement agency. Within seconds, a small helicopter will be launched from the helicarrier, and descend to the front of the house. From the helicopter three figures emerge, two SHIELD agents and the Director himself, Nick Fury.

Fury will come up to the house alone, and will ask to see Captain Britain. Assuming that the Captain will see him — there is no reason why he should not — Fury will quickly get to the point of his visit:

> "Lissen, Cap. Ya don't need me to tell ya what's happenin'. There's been more'n a dozen attacks all round the world. They've just one thing in common — a helluva lot of innocent people get hurt. Fer once, everyone agrees what's gotta be done.... Uncle Sam, the Soviets, the Chinese — even you Limeys. We're gonna do summat about it, Cap, an' we're gonna do it together.
>
> "But ya can guess the problem. We can try anythin' to protect our people down here, but we can't fight back. Now, I bin a soldier long enuff to know that ya don't win a war sittin' on yer butt waitin' to get hit all the time. But how're we gonna fight against a inter-Galactic invasion. I mean, this ain't Star Wars.
>
> "So, we've bin talkin' to a few of you costumed clowns, and we think we got us a solution. With super-brains like Reed Richards and Tony Stark workin' fer us, we got us a way to get us all the way to Home Base, and we know just who's goin' to go. They're all ready and rarin' to go, Cap; the Avengers, the Fantastic Four.... heck, if ol' Doc Doom were alive, I reckon he'd be on that ship too. Everyone in fancy britches is gonna be on that ship, Cap — and I've come ter take ya there, if ya wanna go along fer the ride."
>
> Fury looks at you expectantly, waiting for an answer. After a brief pause he adds, "Cap, we're gonna finish the Kree, once an' fer all — or we're gonna go down tryin'."

Battle

What happens next depends entirely upon Captain Britain's reaction to what he has been told. By now (at the very least) he will be unsure that the Kree are behind the terror raids. It is possible that he knows a lot more than that.

If he starts trying to persuade Fury, or if he flatly refuses to go, he will quickly get on the wrong side of the Director's temper. If the Captain persists in this line of reasoning for more than a few seconds, Nick Fury's patience will snap:

> "Ya don't haveta say no more. I had yer figured as some sorta chicken. Well, I got my orders, an' I mean to carry 'em out. If y'ain't goin' by choice, then I gotta take ya in anyway."

With those words, Fury will pull out his pistol, and start to level it at Captain Britain.

If the Captain offers any resistance, Fury will try to subdue him. He will press a stud on his communicator, summoning the two agents from the helicopter and they will arrive in two rounds. Fury will try to hit Captain Britain with the butt of the pistol, and will engage him in **slugfest** combat. However, the two agents will be less confident in their abilities, and will open fire with their plasma beam weapons as soon as they can get a clear shot.

If Captain Britain is defeated by the SHIELD agents, he will be trussed up and taken aboard the helicarrier. The GM will have to decide how the Captain manages to salvage his position from there. If he is completely restrained, or fails in his escape attempts, he will be helpless to stop the other Superheroes from setting off on their mistaken mission. He may, however, be able to persuade one of the less dogmatic members of the expedition to aid him — Captain Marvel, perhaps. With her (or anyone else's) assistance he could even find a vessel that could take them up into space for an encounter with the Kree mothership (Chapter 5).

If Captain Britain manages to subdue the SHIELD agents quickly enough, he will be able to escape from Braddock Manor, and go into hiding. If this occurs he will be a hunted fugitive, without friends or resources. The GM should try to make the player feel that he is at the lowest ebb in his fortunes, and might even invent a few (negative) encounters with the police or the criminal underworld as he tries to keep out of the clutches of the authorities.

Aftermath

By the end of this chapter Captain Britain could be in any one of several predicaments. If, for whatever reason, he goes along with Nick Fury's proposals, and joins the "crusade" against the Kree home planet, the GM should then reveal that in a last-minute decision, the UN Security Council has ordered that not all of the Superheroes are to go on the mission, leaving the Earth defenceless. Captain Britain will be one of those left behind. Play should then proceed to Chapter 4.

If Captain Britain has resisted Nick Fury and lost, the GM should allow him to make every effort to escape, or to find an accomplice for a desperate journey into space ahead of the mission. Once there, his craft will be spotted by the Kree mothership, and brought in by tractor beam for the encounter in Chapter 5.

If, as seems most likely, Captain Britain escapes, the GM should proceed to Chapter 4.

Karma

Captain Britain will recover up to 60 Health points, although not to a greater total than he had at the start of the adventure.

If SHIELD manage to defeat Captain Britain	-40
If Captain Britain kills a SHIELD agent	-All
If Captain Britain defeats the SHIELD agents	+30

Chapter 4:

PANIC IN THE STREETS

Campaign

Regardless of whether Captain Britain is on the run after the battle with Nick Fury and the SHIELD agents or he has been left behind as part of the Earth's Superhero defence forces, he will eventually find his way to a major city. There, a day or two after the encounter with Fury, he will once again be on the scene as the KISS unit continues its terror attacks.

The form of attack will be much the same as before. One of the Kree ships will land in a public area, and the pilot will emerge. The referee should set up a similar situation to that in St James' Park (Chapter 1). Captain Britain is "off-stage", but the Kree warrior has emerged from his ship with the AugMENT device operating.

In much the same way as before, Captain Britain will see events in an entirely different fashion to the public. On this occasion the KISS warrior is using Kree flame/blast weaponry (which has Excellent range and does Excellent damage to all targets within an area). The citizens within range of the AugMENT device will believe themselves to be under simultaneous ground and air attack by Kree troops.

Captain Britain's mind will be a maelstrom of different ideas. As the AugMENT device affects him, his mind will be triggered by the events that have taken place since his first battle with "Hurricane". This time, Captain Britain will see the Kree warrior as if he were the **Super-Adaptoid™**.

Battle

This attack is primarily aimed at creating an aura of terror in the streets of the city, and therefore the Kree will not be particularly selective in his targets. Instead he will lay waste to his immediate surroundings, setting fire to buildings and razing small structures. The GM should now set out the play on a map of a small section of a major city centre (using the map from the MSH Boxed Set if no other can be prepared), which should again feature a park or piece of open land whereon the Kree landing craft may come down. The Kree warrior will advance on foot along the city streets, creating mayhem wherever he goes.

This will have been going on for several minutes at least before Captain Britain can arrive. The GM should allow the Captain to enter at any point from a randomly selected side of the map, so long as he enters more than three areas away from the Kree warrior.

The GM should read the following to set the scene for the player:

> The vision of destruction and suffering that meets your eyes fills you with horror. The street ahead of you is full of screaming, running people, fleeing from the peril behind them.
>
> At the next junction, innocent people are calling for help from a furiously blazing building. In the street beyond, a grim-visaged being with the powerful, orange arms of The Thing himself has lifted a car containing three helpless people, and is preparing to toss it into the fire. As you look at the scene, and the flames lick hungrily about the building, you realise that part of the building's front wall is only seconds away from falling into the street, onto the milling, frightened crowd below.

The GM should make it clear that there are only a few seconds in which Captain Britain can act. The correct sequence of actions for the Captain is:

1. To deflect the car away from the fire as it is thrown. The landing will not harm the occupants beyond a few cuts and bruises. If Captain Britain tries to catch the car he will take Incredible damage. At the GM's discretion this may require a green Agility FEAT roll.

2. To hold the facade of the building for a few moments to allow the crowds to escape. Again, at the GM's discretion, this may require a green Strength FEAT roll.

3) To deal with the "Super-Adaptoid".

4) To aid the people in the building — they are not in immediate danger. The GM should make this clear to the player if specifically asked about the details of their predicament.

If the problems are tackled in a different order, the GM should inform the player of the following events connected with each at an appropriate moment:

1) If the car is not prevented from being thrown into the flames first, Captain Britain will be powerless to help the occupants.

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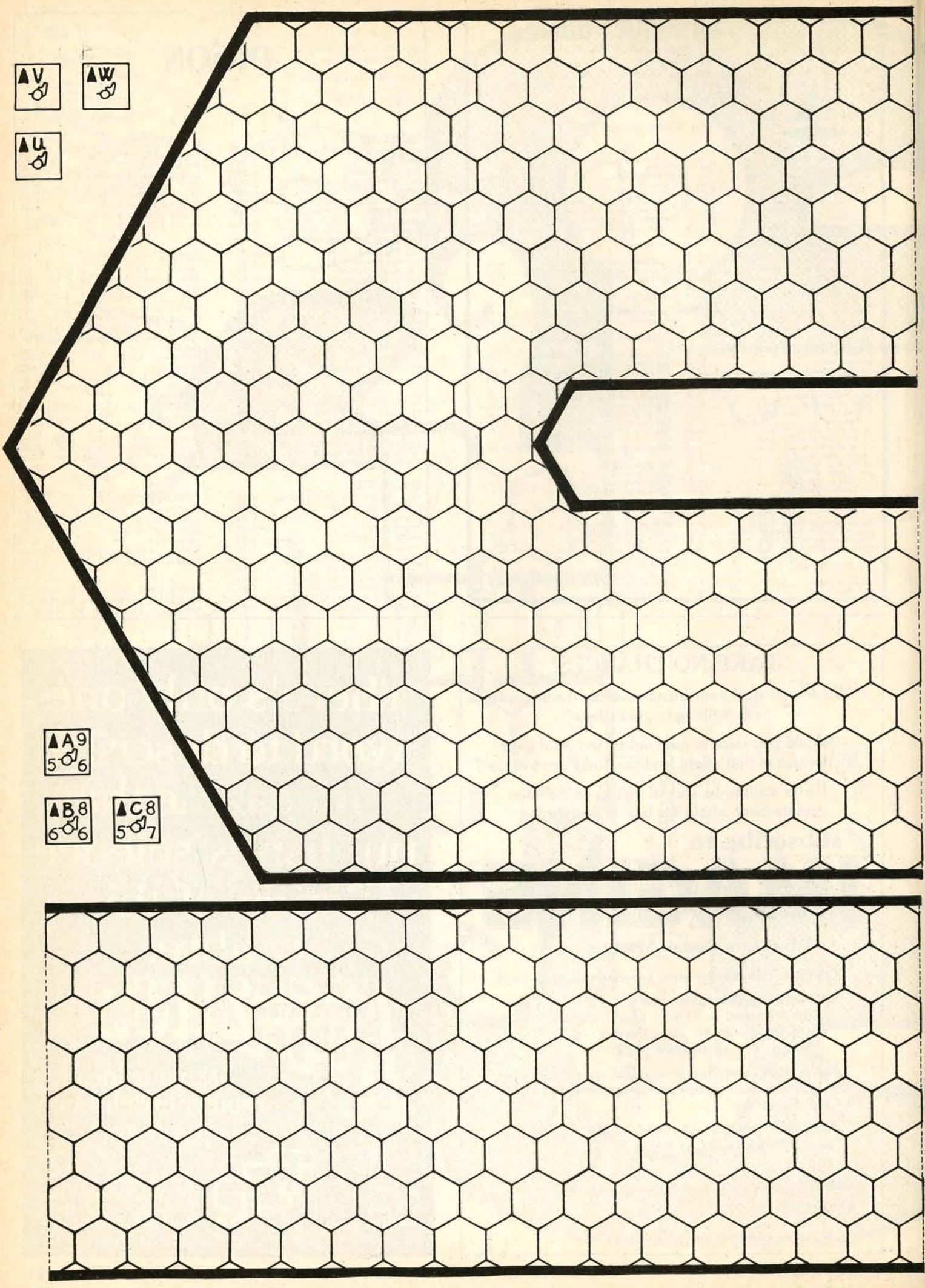
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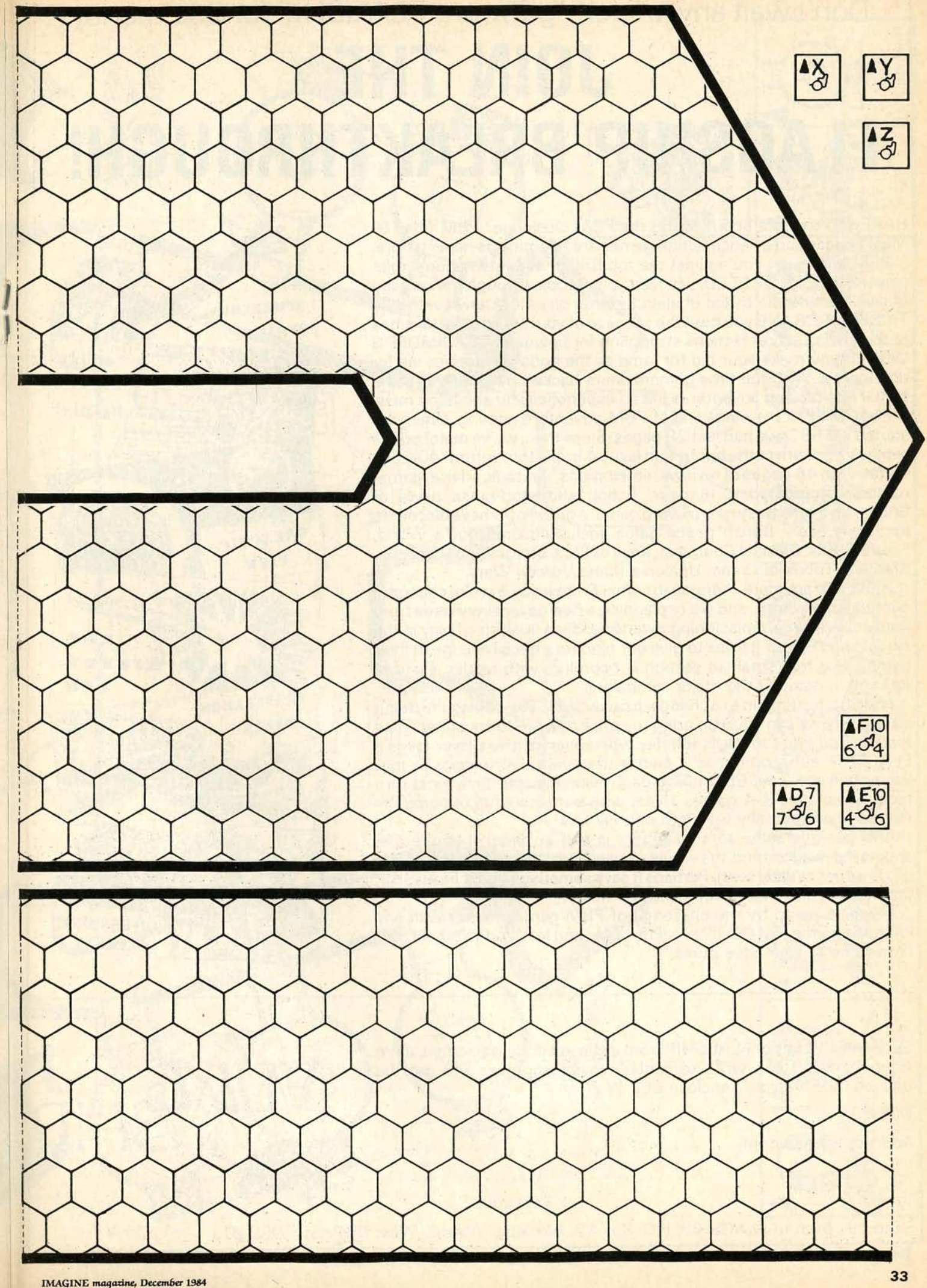
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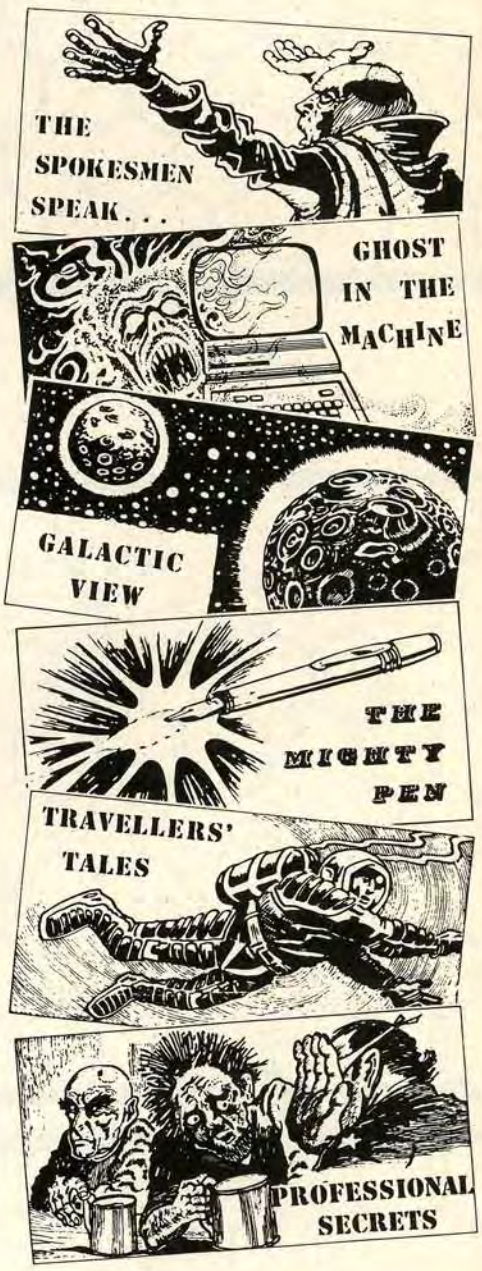

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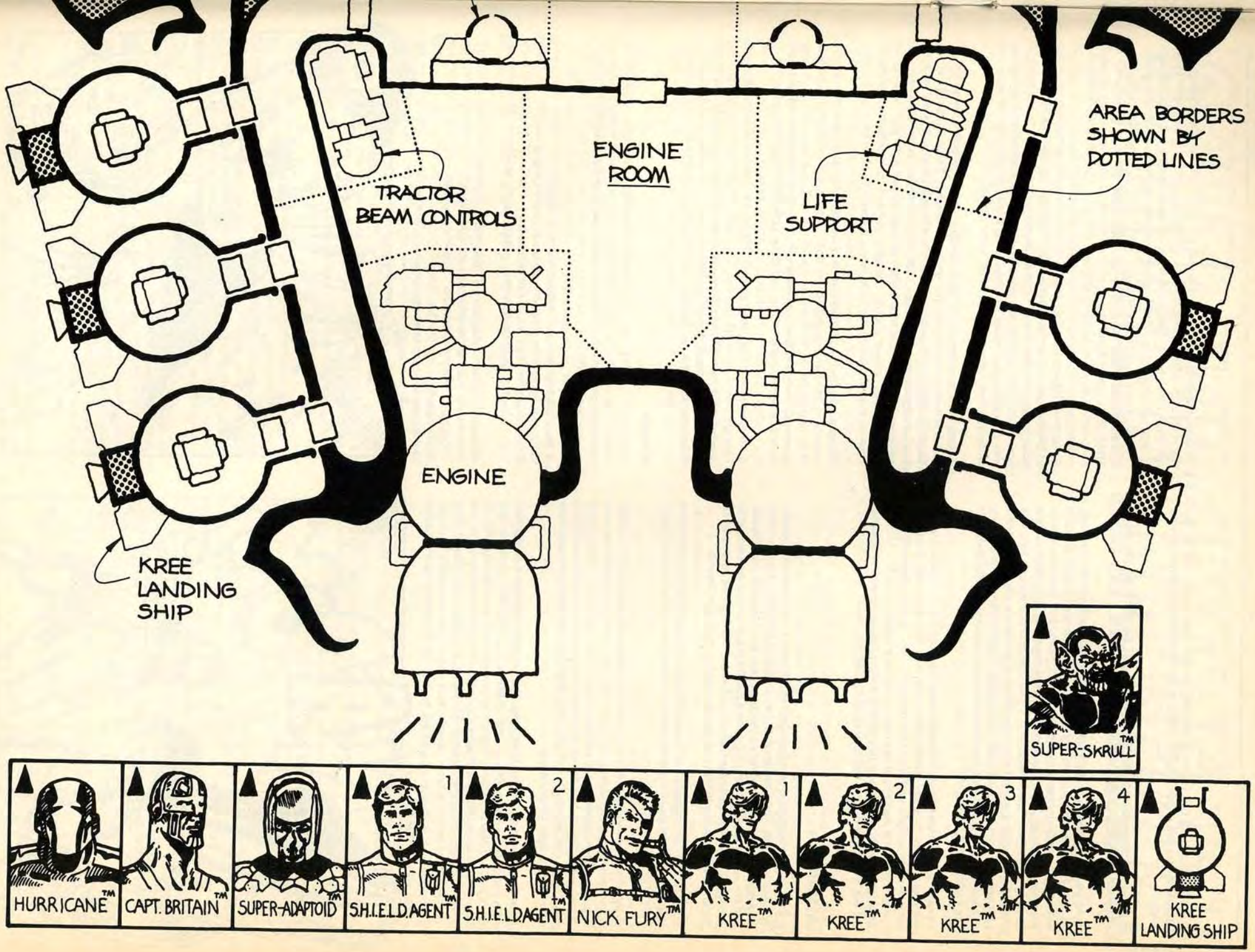
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2) If the facade of the burning building is not held up as one of the Captain's first two actions, it will collapse into the street onto the crowds below.

3) If the Captain ignores the "Super-Adaptoid" for more than three or four rounds, the "android" will return to his ship.

4) As soon as Captain Britain starts rescuing people from the building, he will find that there are thirty men, women and children trapped within. All are frightened and pleading for help, but they are not in immediate danger. If the Captain persists in rescuing the people before dealing with the "Super-Adaptoid", the GM should prompt him into action by describing another outrage that the android is about to commit as it returns to the landing craft, before the Captain can finish clearing the building. He could also reinforce the information that the people in the building are fairly safe.

Despite the fact that Captain Britain sees the Kree soldier as the Super-Adaptoid, there is a key difference in the way this fight will progress, compared to a fight with the real android. The "Super-Adaptoid" (as presented in the statistics) has only retained a template of The Thing's Strength and Fighting abilities and it will not take on any of Captain Britain's abilities during the course of the fight.

Aftermath

If the "Super-Adaptoid" defeats Captain Britain, it will take him back to the landing ship. The Captain will then be taken to the Kree mothership as a captive. The adventure can still progress to Chapter 5, but Captain Britain will enter the mothership as a bound prisoner, not as a surprise guest. At the very least, the GM should allow the Captain to make one attempt to break his bonds and escape with one mighty bound....

If Captain Britain defeats the Super-Adaptoid, he will again find that his memory of events is substantially different from the memories of everyone else.

If, (after saving the people in the blazing building), Captain Britain makes a successful green Reason FEAT roll he will be able to fight his own memory. The Captain will realise that he has not been fighting the Super-Adaptoid — and that his earlier battle with Hurricane could not have been real either. It will become clear that his defeated opponent was but a single Kree warrior.

If he now investigates the Kree ship, the Captain will find that his luck has improved — the ship is not immobilised (the Kree soldier had switched off the Disabling Device by remote control moments before Captain Britain arrived, in anticipation of his own return to the ship). The Kree ship has **Amazing** Control, **Monstrous** Speed and a **Good** Body and is armed with a blaster cannon that will cause **Incredible** damage. The targeting computer is treated as having **Excellent Agility** when firing on automatic.

If Captain Britain makes a yellow Reason FEAT roll, he will be able to fly the craft back to its mothership on automatic pilot. If the Reason FEAT roll gives a red result, Captain Britain will be able to fly the ship manually, and will be able to find the mothership from the autopilot program.

Should he fail the Reason FEAT roll, Captain Britain may make another attempt to understand the craft's controls at the beginning of each succeeding day. The landing ship will be taken away by the military to a nearby base. Nick Fury will arrive that night. His reactions to Captain Britain will depend entirely on how much damage the Captain has done to SHIELD agents in the last few days. Assuming that the Captain has done nothing to alienate Fury, the Director will apologise to the Captain for his short temper, accept an apology from the Captain and agree that the Captain may have his reasons for not wanting to join the Superheroes' mission to the Kree home planet.

If Nick Fury is taken to the Kree landing craft, Captain Britain should make a Reason FEAT roll (for persuasiveness). If the result is yellow, Captain Britain will be able to convince Fury that there could not have been a large scale attack from such a small vessel, and he may (another yellow Reason FEAT) be able to persuade him that the Earth Superheroes' attack should not take place. If he doesn't sway Fury's opinion the mission to the Kree home planet will blast off in three days.

If Captain Britain is unlucky with a string of die rolls which mean that he cannot fly the landing ship, the autopilot will cut in while he is sitting at the controls trying to make sense of them. The device will have been activated from the Kree mothership, to bring the smaller vessel home. This will occur one day after the fight with the "Super-Adaptoid".

If the Captain makes a successful red Reason FEAT roll he will be able to operate the AugMENT device. This will affect the Kree aboard the mother ship every bit as dramatically as it affects human beings (it will also affect Captain Britain unless he dons the Kree helmet captured from the second Kree warrior which is kept aboard the landing craft).

Karma

Captain Britain has no opportunity to recover any Health points at the end of this chapter (unless he fails his Reason FEATs when attempting to work the controls of the Kree landing ship and spends a day trying to understand them).

If the "Super-Adaptoid" defeats Captain Britain	-20
If further damage to property occurs during the fight	-10
If the people in the car are not rescued	-30
If the building front crashes onto people in the street	-30
If Captain Britain holds the building front in place and allows the people to escape from beneath	+30
If Captain Britain defeats the "Super-Adaptoid"	+40
If the people in the car are saved	+30
If the people in the burning building are saved	+30

Chapter 5:

COUNTDOWN: ARMAGEDDON

Campaign

Having activated the Kree ship (or having had it activated for him), Captain Britain will be lifted up to the Kree mothership. This vessel has remained undetected because of its small size — all detection devices on Earth have been looking for a ship large enough to carry the hundreds of Kree warriors "seen" during the terror attacks. The mothership is no bigger than a large satellite.

The landing craft will head towards one of the docking bays on the flank of the bigger vessel. At this point, the GM should place the map of the mothership on pages 30 & 35 in front of the player. The internal details of the ship should be hidden until the Captain has passed through the airlock. IMAGINE magazine grants permission for players to photocopy this map for personal use.

If Captain Britain has managed to operate the craft manually, approaching the ship is a green Agility FEAT and docking successfully with the mothership is a yellow Agility FEAT.

Suppressors on the Kree landing ship's weaponry computer will prevent it firing on the Kree mother ship and an alarm will be sounded in the Super-Skrull's Command Centre if any attempt is made to open fire. In this case the Kree warriors aboard the ship will be ready and waiting.

The Kree will also be prepared if Captain Britain flies up to the mother ship at any other time than immediately after the defeat of the "Super-Adaptoid". They will not fire upon the landing craft, but will allow it to dock. When the airlock opens, the Kree soldiers will be waiting.

Battle

If Captain Britain has flown into space immediately after the fight with the "Super-Adaptoid" (and without activating the AugMENT device), the GM should place only as many KISS soldiers aboard the ship as there are player characters. The remaining Kree are still engaged in raids on the planet's surface. The Kree expect no-one other than their own to arrive, and will be completely surprised as Captain Britain makes his entrance. However, they will not surrender without a fight.

The Kree will not use heavy weapons. Their shipboard hand weapons are the equivalent of shotguns (except that they only need one hand to fire) or can be used as blunt weapons (see the Battle Book, p14). Although the outer walls, and bulkheads between the body of the mothership and the command centre are of Monstrous Strength, all other internal walls, and all the equipment in the ship is of Remarkable strength, and the Kree will not risk disabling the vessel.

If Captain Britain defeats the Kree aboard, he may look around the main body of the ship. If he makes a Reason FEAT roll and gets a yellow result he will find a sensor panel. The display will show a number of dots converging on the centre — the other Kree warriors returning to base.

The Captain can again gain surprise by waiting for the Kree to enter the mothership. To disable the airlock or otherwise bar the entry of the returning KISS troopers requires a yellow Strength FEAT to destroy the instrumentation on the airlock panel. The Kree will be unable to escape in their landing ships as all will be low on fuel. Firing the main batteries at the returning Kree ships will require a yellow Reason FEAT to work out how the gun works and a red Agility FEAT to hit a Kree landing craft.

If Captain Britain activates the AugMENT device as he approaches the mothership, the Kree aboard the ship will believe that they are under attack by a huge fleet of Kree ships sent to destroy them (they are fearful that their mission might not have the blessing of their masters). The GM should make an Intuition FEAT roll for the Super-Skrull, a red result indicating that he has resisted the effects of the device. He will order the Kree warriors to put on their screening helmets, and they will await the approaching ship as before.

If the Super-Skrull is deceived by AugMENT, the Kree will not don their helmets and will believe their chances of survival to be slim. Two will operate the blasters aboard the mother ship. Captain Britain will see seemingly random blasts of energy. The GM should roll Agility FEATs for the Kree gunners, but only on a 100 result will fire come near to Captain Britain's ship. The Kree gunners must still make a green Agility FEAT to actually hit the landing craft. The blasters cause **Amazing** damage.

As the Captain docks the landing craft, the Kree will cease firing. At that moment, the front section of the mothership will detach and fire its own motors — the Super-Skrull has remembered that discretion is the better part of valour. The Kree will surrender to Captain Britain as he enters through the airlock.

Aftermath

There are many ways that this battle may end, the GM's task is simpler if the following points are considered:

If Captain Britain approached under cover of the AugMENT device, the Kree may have surrendered, and the Super-Skrull will have detatched the Command Centre in an attempt to flee. Captain Britain can convince the Kree that their commander, "Kay-tell", is not what he seems. The Kree soldiers have followed their orders with total obedience, but with increasing concern — they may be fanatics, but they are not stupid. They have been monitoring the preparations for the attack on their home world, and are now less than sure that "Kay-tell" knows what he is doing; they have had several doubts raised by one or two minor inconsistencies in "Kay-tell's" behaviour. They will listen to any simple instructions he might give them, and if he attempts to convince them that their commander is not who he seems, they will be prepared to listen. Captain Britain will successfully persuade the Kree to aid him if the GM makes a red Reason FEAT for each Kree soldier. This FEAT is shifted 1 column to the right for each warrior who has already decided that the Captain is right. If Captain Britain mentions that "Kay-tell" was confused over the identity of Captain Marvel, successful yellow Reason FEATs will suffice. If convinced of "Kay-tell's" non-Kreehood, the KISS warriors will join the Captain for the last part of the adventure, operating a tractor beam to return the Command Centre to the mothership.

If Captain Britain did not use AugMENT, but still boarded and defeated the Kree, he will be able (as above) to persuade those still conscious of the oddities of "Kay-tell's" actions. Since the Super-Skrull will not know that he is aboard, Captain Britain and the Kree he has convinced will be able to surprise the Super-Skrull in the adjacent Command Centre.

If Captain Britain boarded the ship in any other way (after a day's delay, so that the Kree were waiting for him for example), and defeated the Kree soldiers, he will not have time to persuade any of them to his side. The adventure should proceed to the beginning of Chapter 6.

Lastly, the Captain may have been captured by the Kree, after this, or an earlier battle. The GM should allow the Captain at least one chance to escape, but if this fails, the final showdown with the Super-Skrull will have to take place in a somewhat disadvantageous position! If Captain Britain is brought aboard as a prisoner the Kree will be less willing to believe him (the GM should shift the Reason FEATs one column to the left). He could gain an advantage over the Kree if he could give away the position of the mothership to a ground station on Earth. If Captain Britain can distract or bluff his way to the communications gear in the main chamber and make a yellow Reason FEAT roll (to work out how to operate the alien technology) he will be able to send out a signal. The GM should decide how this is received on Earth, taking particular note of the Captain's popularity after meeting Nick Fury, but a small group of Superheroes might be sent into space to investigate. The Kree might not give Captain Britain their full attention as another spacecraft closes in....

Karma

There is no opportunity to recover any Health points.

If the Kree defeat Captain Britain	-20
If Captain Britain causes the death of a KISS trooper	-All
If Captain Britain defeats the Kree	+30
If Captain Britain persuades the Kree to join forces with him	+40

Chapter 6:

THE CHAMPION OF CHAOS!

Campaign

Since his earlier encounters with Captain Britain at Braddock Manor, the Super-Skrull has isolated himself in his Command Centre at the front of the Kree mothership. He is aware that the Kree soldiers are beginning to have doubts about "Kay-tell" and his orders. His plans are entering the critical phase with the preparations for the Superheroes' punitive attack on the Kree home world being well advanced.

He will, therefore, pay no attention to the arrival of a KISS raiding craft (carrying Captain Britain) at the mothership. The Command centre is sufficiently isolated from the main body of the mothership that the Super-Skrull will not be able to hear any sounds of conflict from there.

If any of the KISS troopers join Captain Britain for this final battle, or if Captain Britain is a prisoner, the lock on the Command Centre door will be operated by a Kree soldier. In other circumstances, should Captain Britain examine the door, he will notice that it is operated by a metallic card. He will be able to find a keycard on any Kree soldier.

If surprised, "Kay-tell" will be sitting at a Control Console at the front of the vessel, monitoring the Superheroes' mission to the Kree home world. In other circumstances (such as the Command Centre being pulled back to the mothership by tractor beam) "Kay-tell" will be in the corridor with a plasma weapon (treat as a blaster that does **Incredible** damage) in his hands. If he sees the Kree acting with Captain Britain, or sees that they are incapacitated, he will take the first opportunity he gets to **shape change** into his normal form.

Battle

Because of the close quarters, the Super-Skrull will not use all his powers — it would clearly be suicidal for him to use the fire-throwing abilities of the Human Torch. However, he is still a formidable opponent who knows that if he can keep control of the mothership he may still cause war between the humans and the Kree — even without the aid of the KISS unit. He will fight until the battle is utterly hopeless, and then try to escape in the Command Centre. If any Kree are alive, or if Captain Britain makes a yellow Reason FEAT roll, this will be futile, because the Command Centre can be held by the tractor beam indefinitely — always assuming it hasn't been disabled by the fight!

He will only fire the plasma gun if he has a clear target. His first targets will be the Kree soldiers, since he relishes the thought of a one-to-one duel with Captain Britain, who has been a thorn in his flesh. As soon as he has shed his guise as Kay-tell he will use his **force field** to sweep the Kree soldiers into an airlock, and manipulate the controls by **stretching** his arm, blowing the Kree out into the vacuum of space. He will then turn his full attention to Captain Britain.

The GM should keep note of the damage done to the Kree ship during the fight. The ship plans included in this issue of IMAGINE magazine have the various control points and machinery for the different operations of the ship marked. All controls are capable of taking Remarkable damage before they cease to function, and the heavier equipment (such as engines) of the ship can withstand all but Amazing damage.

If the tractor beam controls are destroyed the Command Centre cannot be pulled back to the mothership, and the Super-Skrull will be able to escape. Five rounds after the Life Support controls are destroyed all within the mothership will start to feel the effects as the air becomes foul. Everyone will lose 1 Endurance rank and 20 health points per round until they reach a source of fresh air (such as the Command Centre or one of the Kree landing craft). Once in fresh air a character can recover 1 Endurance rank and 10 health points per round (but only the Health points lost due to the lack of air).

Aftermath

Once the Super-Skrull is defeated, any of the Kree soldiers still alive, will offer whatever aid they can to the Captain, but will insist that he make every effort to convince the authorities about what has really been happening.

If the Super-Skrull has been captured, taking him back to Earth will convince the authorities of their error, and the attack on the Kree will be aborted. If he escapes, or the Kree mothership is damaged to such a degree that he and it cannot be taken to Earth (the engines or pilot's console are destroyed), Captain Britain must try to persuade someone in authority that the attack should be postponed. If he contacts Nick Fury, or the Secretary General of the UN, the GM should make a green Reason FEAT roll for the individual concerned. Politicians have Good Reason for this purpose. If the Captain is successful in persuading them to call off the attack all will be well. But if he fails....

Karma

If the Super-Skrull escapes	-30
If Captain Britain fails halt the Superheroes' attack on the Kree home world	-30
If any Kree allies are killed by the Super-Skrull	-10
If the Super-Skrull is defeated	+70
If the Kree mothership is brought to Earth	+20

Envoi

Well, that's all over... and hopefully the good Captain saved the World — and the Kree world, too! What happens now is up to you, the GM, and the player(s). If you carry on using Captain Britain in a MARVEL SUPER HEROES campaign, then you might like to consider some of the following:

Did the Super-Skrull escape? Then vengeance will be uppermost in his mind for quite a long time — look out Captain!
What's SHIELD's attitude towards CB when he goes around beating up Nick Fury and not obeying orders? And the other Superheroes who *know* that the Kree were behind it all? If the Captain finds himself ostracised by his fellows, what will he do?

Captain Britain can now recover from the rigours of this adventure, but another one is sure to be just around the corner.... Remember, the best source of further adventures are the comics themselves.

Have fun!

And A Cast of Thousands....

HURRICANE

Real Name: Albert Potter
Fighting: TYPICAL
Agility: TYPICAL
Strength: TYPICAL
Endurance: EXCELLENT
Reason: REMARKABLE
Intuition: TYPICAL
Psyche: TYPICAL
Health: 38 (22)
Karma: 42

Powers

BODY ARMOUR: Hurricane's body armour is also his life-support system. It gives him Incredible protection against attacks, and raises his Endurance to Excellent. His vulnerable spot is the armour's back pack. This only has Excellent protection, and if it is disconnected Hurricane's Endurance will become Poor. In addition, he will take 1d10 points of damage per round as his metabolism runs out of control.
WRIST BLASTERS: Hurricane's wrist blasters concentrate hurricane force winds into a small area.

With them, Hurricane has Incredible strength for **Slugfests** and other Strength FEATs. They can also do Incredible damage at Excellent range. When shooting with his wrist blasters Hurricane has Excellent Agility.

Hurricane can also use them to create a mini-hurricane in the immediately surrounding areas (he stands in the calm eye of the hurricane). This takes two rounds, and the storm does Amazing damage to all those caught in it.
FLIGHT: Thrusters on Hurricane's armour allow him to fly at Remarkable speed.

Talents

Because of his scientific background Hurricane's Reason is Incredible in all matters relating to metereology.

Background

Albert Potter began his career as a meteorologist at the London Weather Research Centre. Mocked by his colleagues for his research failures, he secretly built an experimental weather control craft, but while he was attempting to tame Hurricane Linda something went wrong. The power of the maelstrom entered him, and Hurricane was born....

SUPER-ADAPTOID™

android
Fighting: TYPICAL
Agility: TYPICAL
Strength: TYPICAL
Endurance: TYPICAL
Reason: TYPICAL
Intuition: TYPICAL
Psyche: TYPICAL
Health: 150
Karma: varies
Resources: none
Popularity: 5

Powers

DUPLICATION: The Super-Adaptoid can imitate and retain physical abilities and powers of any super-powered beings that he can see and that are in his area. The Super-Adaptoid can instantly and completely imitate up to five separate heroes.

The Super-Adaptoid duplicates the Fighting, Agility, Strength and Endurance of its targets, and physical manifestations of power. It cannot duplicate Reason, Intuition or Psyche. It can pick and choose which abilities and powers it wants. It has duplicated android, alien and mutant abilities, as well as material objects such as Hawkeye's bows and Iron Man's armour.

The Super-Adaptoid can retain the powers of up to five heroes for two years. During this adventure, the templates of the **Avengers™** have been erased, leaving only its **The Thing™** template.

Background

Created by AIM (Advanced Idea Mechanics) in what may have been a freak accident, the Super-Adaptoid has fought the Avengers on a number of occasions.

NICK FURY

Director of S.H.I.E.L.D.
Fighting: EXCELLENT
Agility: EXCELLENT
Strength: GOOD
Endurance: EXCELLENT
Reason: EXCELLENT
Intuition: EXCELLENT
Psyche: GOOD
Health: 70
Karma: 50
Resources: AMAZING
Popularity: 75

Talents

Fury has trained as a paratrooper, a ranger, a demolitions expert (including underwater demolitions), and a pilot. He can operate any vehicle made on Earth, including space-craft. He is a master of the martial arts and wrestling, a marksman and a weapons master.

Fury is also knowledgeable in law and law enforcement, engineering, history, and the military. He is even skilled in first aid.

Equipment/Possessions

Nick Fury carries much of the same equipment as other SHIELD agents. However, he has access to a number of unusual devices, and he is likely to have several pieces of special equipment with him at any time.

Personality

Nick Fury likes to pretend he's a dummy so his enemies will underestimate him.

SHIELD Agent

Fighting: GOOD
Agility: TYPICAL
Strength: TYPICAL
Endurance: GOOD
Reason: TYPICAL
Intuition: TYPICAL
Psyche: TYPICAL
Health: 32
Karma: 18
Resources: GOOD
Popularity: 19

Talents

All agents are trained in firearms, first aid, and law-enforcement and military operations. Some are also trained in martial arts, wrestling, special weapons, and piloting.

Equipment/Possessions

SUIT: Agents' suits provide Typical protection from damage and Excellent resistance to fire.
WEAPONS: Each agent carries a handgun, a thermite bomb, a fragmentation grenade, a gas bomb, a 20-inch piece of strangling wire, a flexible saw, a radio-link pocket computer and two spare ammo clips.
BLASTER: This weapon does Excellent damage to whatever it hits. Agents prefer this weapon because it can bring down large opponents without killing them. Its range is 5 areas.

SUPER-SKRULL™

Skrull Warrior
Fighting: REMARKABLE
Agility: EXCELLENT
Strength: AMAZING
Endurance: AMAZING
Reason: TYPICAL
Intuition: TYPICAL
Psyche: GOOD
Health: 150
Karma: 22
Resources: FEEBLE
Popularity: 0

Powers

SHAPE-SHIFTING: Like all Skrull, Super-Skrull can alter his shape and appearance to resemble anything of about the same size and weight.
BODY ARMOUR: Super-Skrull has Remarkable body armour.
FLIGHT: By creating a blast of fire from his feet and legs, the Super-Skrull can fly at Incredible speed.
GENERATE AND CONTROL FIRE: Like the Human Torch, the Super-Skrull can create flames from his own body or control external flames, doing so with Monstrous power. Super-Skrull can also use fire as a distance weapon, causing Monstrous damage with Good range (3 areas). He has Monstrous resistance to fire.
INVISIBILITY: Super-Skrull can make himself invisible to normal, ultra-violet and infra-red light with Excellent power.
FORCE FIELD: Super-Skrull's force field is Amazing.
STRETCHING: Like Mr. Fantastic, Super-Skrull can stretch his body and reach as far as three areas away. He can attack or grapple several non-adjacent opponents at one time.
COSMIC POWER: The Super-Skrull's powers are stronger when he is absorbing more cosmic energy. The ability and power ranks listed here are what he can do under Earth's normal doses of cosmic rays. If the Super-Skrull is getting additional cosmic rays, from a natural or artificial source, the following abilities and powers increase by one rank: Strength, Endurance, Flight, Generate and Control Fire, Force Field and Stretching. His health also increases by 50 points.

KREE™

Alien Race
Fighting: GOOD
Agility: TYPICAL
Strength: EXCELLENT
Endurance: EXCELLENT
Reason: GOOD
Intuition: GOOD
Psyche: TYPICAL
Health: 56
Karma: 26
Resources: TYPICAL
Popularity: 30

The Kree is an alien race that keeps tabs on the Earth frequently. Most of the powerful individuals are blue-skinned humanoids, but the majority of the race's members have the same skin colour as humans.

They are extremely militaristic and want to conquer as much territory as possible. They have been at war with the Skrulls, a shape-shifting alien race, for longer than all of recorded human history. Their advanced technology makes them a threat to any race.

They control more than 1,000 star systems. They have mastered intergalatic and hyper-space travel and they possess abundant powerful weaponry.

There have been three major representatives of the Kree to Earth: Captain Mar-vell, Ronan the Accuser, and Supremor (The Supreme Intelligence). For the most part, the Kree leave Earth alone and just observe it. In the past they have used powerful giant robots of varying abilities called Sentries to watch over our planet.

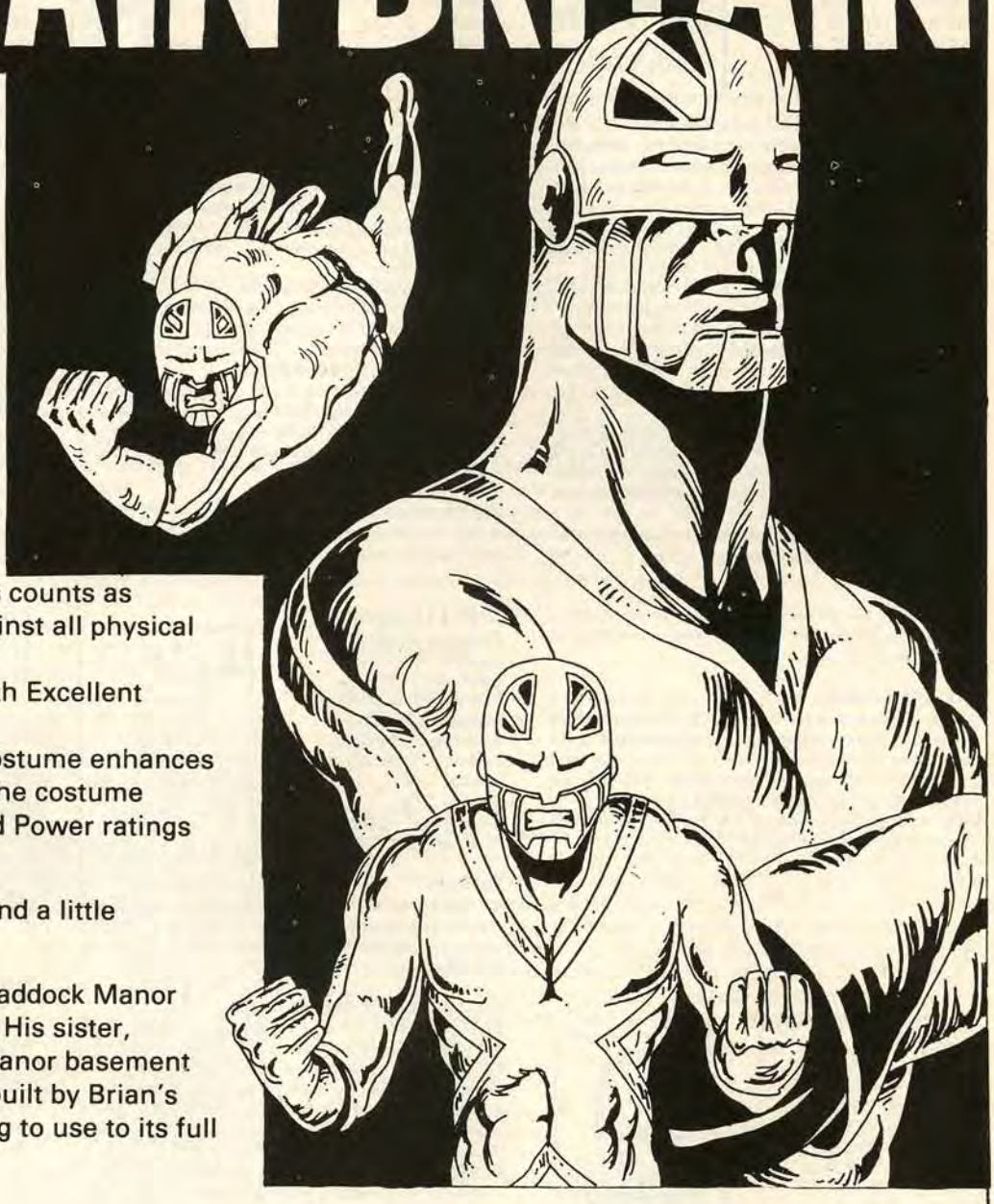
The Avengers have directly involved themselves with the Kree by entering the Kree-Skrull war. On many occasions the Avengers have interacted with The Supreme Intelligence and the Kree, sometimes to thwart a plot and sometimes to save the universe.

CREDITS

Penned with 1000 Karma by **Paul Cockburn**
Altered with Poor Reason by **Mike Brunton**
Map drawn with the Monstrous Power of Image Generation by Hitchin's answer to Captain America, **Paul Ruiz**.
Artwork drawn faster than a speeding bullet by **Tim** ("I really like Judge Dredd") **Sell**
Aided by members of TSR UK's Product Development team — the "Triffic Three": **Graeme** (Feeble Agility) **Morris, Jim** (Poor Intuition) **Bambra** and **Phil** (Shift O Psyche) **Gallagher**
Special fanx: **Tom Kirby** (we borrowed his comics).

A new hero for the MARVEL SUPER HEROES Game:

CAPTAIN BRITAIN



Real Name: Brian Braddock (Secret Identity)
Profession: Adventurer
Fighting: Incredible (40)
Agility: Remarkable (30)
Strength: Remarkable (30)
Endurance: Remarkable (30)
Intuition: Incredible (40)
Psyche: Excellent (20)
Resources: Excellent 20/500
Health: 130
Karma: 80
Popularity: 80

Powers

Bio-Electrical Force Field: This counts as Remarkable Body Armour against all physical and energy attacks.

Flight: The Captain can fly with Excellent speed

Costume: Captain Britain's costume enhances his natural abilities. Without the costume reduce all Prime Requisite and Power ratings by one rank.

Talents: Physics, computers and a little chemistry

Background: Brian lives at Braddock Manor and is independently wealthy. His sister, Elizabeth, is a telepath. The Manor basement houses a powerful computer built by Brian's father which he is still learning to use to its full potential.

Captain Britain in MSH
Designer's Notes

The **MARVEL SUPERHEROES GAME** is really designed for use with pregenerated characters, but by no means every Marvel hero and villain is currently available in official publications, so there is still a need for character adaptations. The nearest thing to an 'official' source is the **Marvel Universe** publication, but even this can be out of date, especially when the current plotline is being generated in the UK rather than at Marvel HQ. For this article I've called on some expert help, and I'd particularly like to thank Frank Plowright, Alan Moore and Jamie Delana. What follows should provide a good guide as to how to go about adapting a character to the game.

The Campaign Book in MSH contains a large list of examples of characters exhibiting the various ranks of Prime Requisites. This is a good place to start when developing a new character. Captain Britain only features once on the lists, being given a Strength of Remarkable. The Marvel Universe confirms this (he can lift just under a ton) and gives his flying speed as 132 mph, a rating of Excellent. Further information can be gleaned from stories. This extract from an Alan Moore story was particularly useful:

He can fly. He is capable of inhuman strength and endurance. His senses are acute to the point of being uncanny. He is also protected by a bio-electrical force-field. However, while these powers are innate, they rely to a great extent upon amplification circuitry built into his costume.

Checking with the writers confirmed that the costume affects all the Captain's abilities. I've assumed that it makes one rank difference all round (MSH rates all Prime Requisites as discrete ranks rather than a continuous scale. The scale is not linear and an improvement of one rank represents a considerable increase in power). On the physical side I've rated him as an exceptional human without the costume, with a little extra bonus on fighting ability. The Captain has no other means of laying low his opponents, so he had better be good in a slug fest. On the mental side Brian Braddock's university degree helps us in rating him for Reason and his experiences with 'magical' forces (Merlin and the Otherworld) should give him slightly above average Psyche. The comments above suggest a fairly high rating for Intuition. The force-field should be proof against most things, but not too strong as it is actively generated rather than a permanent fixture like Hulk's skin.

Each PR rank has a value associated with it as the four physical attributes combine to give the Captain a Health (hit points) of 130. The mental PRs combine to give him a starting Karma of 80 which is pretty useful. His Popularity rating should be fairly high thanks to his patriotic image but then we British are not really used to superheroes yet so we knock it down a bit for that. 80 (out of 100) was Jamie's figure. Brian Braddock's parents were very wealthy, bequeathing him Braddock Manor. This gives us his Resources level. His university course will have given him some Talents: physics, obviously; probably a reasonable knowledge of chemistry; and a good knowledge of computers.

Captain Britain stats for the Marvel Superheroes Game by:

Pete Tamlyn

Art: Tim Sell

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Monsters, Magic & Menageries

A new look at a very old hobby

by John McKeown

Having looked at the creation of magic items in #12 of **IMAGINE** magazine, it is natural that we turn now to the creation, or rather breeding, of magical monsters.

I stumbled across a mention of this strange occupation in the volume **First Fantasy Campaign**, by Dave Arneson, and decided to draw up some workable guidelines for its use in campaigns. I was prompted partly by the oblique references in the **Monster Manual** to the origins of some of its denizens, but mainly by the fact that here is a traditional pursuit of magicians of which the **AD&D®** game gives us barely a glance.

The driving force of some ambitious magicians is an aspiration to create new and different forms of life. In the Advanced rules, magic users of very high level are able to create golems (*covered in #19*) and homonculi. The former are monotonous and the latter are nearer to warped clones than new life.... yet in terms of actual creation this is a powerful achievement.

Among magic users of more moderate prowess this aspiration often expresses itself, not in creation — which is beyond them — but in the engendering of new forms, unnaturally born of magical crosses between radically different species, or warped in the womb by the magician's will. The Owlbear and Peryton are examples of crosses, and most giant varieties of normal animals are cases of the latter — usually only achieved in their final form after a number of generations of magical breeding. All those mentioned in the MM represent wildly successful experiments; achieving sustained, unsupervised breeding in the wild, and often expanding to relatively large populations. Very few projects are so successful. They rarely result in the desired mutations or crosses, more often in unwanted or useless differences, and very frequently in sick, infertile or crippled monsters. Understandably, this pastime is utterly despised by all druids, who will often descend upon the perpetrator's workshop on hearing of such practices, to free all the pure breeding stock and kill any experimental progeny. Most ordinary people dislike the practice because of (usually exaggerated) fears of strange beasts breaking out of their pens at night. Accordingly, it is best done some way from settled populations, or at least out of sight.

SETTING UP

Mind set on taking up this Chaotic hobby, our MU takes off into a nearby dark, impenetrable forest. In a small, separate spell book are one or both of the spells fundamental to the plan; **distort life I** and **ritual of twaining** (see descriptions later). Both are Level 4 spells, effectively limiting the experiments to magic users of 7th or higher level.

The skills of animal breeding and animal handling are essential, and the MU should acquire these or assistants who have them. Actually, it's a good idea to get a few helpers anyway, as a lot of the tasks associated with looking after a load of animals and keeping their pens clean are menial and not befitting even a disreputable magic user.

The breeding stock that the MU is able to acquire will strongly influence his future operations. He is not creating life, but breeding from old forms, by inducing mutations or unnatural crosses. If crossing, at least two different species are required. Some may be purchased at large markets or by sending agents to purchase them in exotic lands. The MU may well want magical creatures, as these tend to have more interesting properties, and are more amenable to distortion than natural purebreeds. Parties must be hired to capture these, perhaps in some numbers, giving rise to many expeditions.

The menagerie should have enough secure pens and cages of suitable sizes to hold all the current stock, and experimental births — which will probably be kept in isolation. There should in addition always be a lot of spare quarters, for new births which may come in unpredictable numbers, and also for new breeding stock which may arrive at any time, as groups sent out to trap specimens return.

Some monsters will require pens that are considerably more costly than normal. Proofing against fire, acid, violence or other hazards, will have to be adjudicated. As well as the dangers from within, the creature may have to be protected from what is without — it may require a certain environment, whether heated, chilled, light, dark, or even air-tight to retain a special atmosphere (extreme, but not beyond advanced experimenters). All these may add to cost and often require attendant keepers.

BREEDING AND RAISING

For each species involved, the DM must decide on certain statistics; the **Species Traits**.

Species Traits

1 The time of year and frequency (usually annual) of the breeding season
2 The chance of captive animals breeding during the season
3 The period of pregnancy (or incubation for eggs)
4 Litter size — a range eg 2d6 or a fixed number (very often a single 1)
5 Mothering period (no new pregnancy). Can range from nil to a year or more.
6 The age of maturity
7 Gender of offspring — unless otherwise noted, a 50% chance of either.

For instance, the DM might decide that the traits of the Griffon are: 1 annually/spring; 2 60%; 3 four months; 4 one only; 5 six months; 6 two years

The DM doesn't have to work these out for a species until a player starts experimenting with it — so don't worry, you haven't got to go through the whole MM and FF assigning these.

There is one chance only per breeding season, so when this time comes around, the DM looks up the probability of breeding in captivity — say 90% for a rabbit or 10% for a dragon, and makes a roll. If successful, he then determines exactly when within the breeding season the mating happened (this is important when calculating the time of birth). For cross-breeding you must make the rolls for both species involved, so if you want to engender a rabbit-dragon, 1-90 and 1-10 rolls must both be made successfully.

Some of the more exotic monsters are notoriously hard to breed in any case, but an MU can resort to the spell **animal magnetism** (what else could I call it!)

The actual time of birth will vary around the expected time by +/- 12% of the pregnancy period. Roll a d6: 1, 2 — d6 x 2% premature; 3, 4 — on time; 5, 6 — d6 x 2% overdue.

The chance of a disorder is increased by 5% for every 2% that the time of birth varies from the norm (see **Defects**).

SOME EXTERNAL FEATURES — DISTORTION OF THE FIRST ORDER

Colouring: change colour or pattern; spots, stripes etc. Base — 80%
Covering: this may be hide (G0), fur (G2), scales (G6) or feathers (G9). The change takes as many generations as the difference between the numbers in brackets; ie, seven generations from feathers to fur. Feathers or hide do not a bird or bat make, but they're a step in the right direction. Base chance of success — 40%.
Toughening: takes two generations per shift in Armour Class. Toughening can be taken much further with scales than other coverings. Fire and acid resistant coverings can be induced, though these are of course not magical in nature and do not provide invulnerability. Base — 20% + (current AC x 5%).
Limbs: Such changes affect pairs of limbs, except where the 'limb' is a tail.
i — Alteration of the ends of limbs: enlarged claws and even spiked tails are included in this. Base 40%, but very variable.
ii — Whole limb changes: wings (tricky, but popular), prehensile tail, increased movement speed. Base — 30%, G2.
iii — Limb (Dis)Appearance: legs, arms, tentacles, tails and proto-wings. Base 20% (or 40% for disappearance). G2 for either.
Senses: Hearing, Smell, Taste or Touch can be made more acute. Base — 60%.
Sight: Specialities like Nightsight and Infravision. The range can reach a maximum of 120', at 30' per generation. Base — 50%.
Mouth: Teeth size, hollow incisors. Base — 40%, G2.
Noise (larynx): Base — 70%.

INTERNAL PHYSIOLOGY — DISTORTION OF THE SECOND ORDER

Lungs: Breathing, or tolerance of, different gases. Gills. Base — 50%, G3.
Glands: Venom, Acid, Fire. Base — 40%, G2.
Eating Habits: Between carnivore and herbivore, or to induce a taste for wood or iron or other strange things. Base — 60%, G3; or 40%, G5.
Size: Raise or lower hp by 10%; eg, if you breed from two horses with an average of 10 hp you naturally find a +/- 10% variation in the progeny, giving horses which when mature have between 9-11hp. A spell for increased size would bring 10-12hp horses. Base — 50%.
Age of Maturity: A 10% change is possible per generation, up to 50%. Base — 60%.

SPECIAL AND MAGICAL POWERS — DISTORTION OF THE THIRD ORDER

Vision Into Other Planes: Base — 60%, Gd3.
Plane-Shifting: Base — 40%, Gd4.
Petrifying Vision: Base — 30%, Gd3.
Shape-Changing: Base — 50%, Gd3+1.
Intelligence: Base — 20%, G1.
Speech (must have INT): Base — 40%, G2d6.

There are many more possibilities than I can mention, not the least of which are powers of invisibility, regeneration, or invulnerability to all but magical weapons. The DM must work out a reasonable Base Chance for the mutation to succeed, and a generation delay where necessary.
Where the attempted mutation fails, the DM should make a percentile roll against the ***Mutation Misfire*** *table below, according to the spell being used:*

Mutation Misfires

Distort I	Distort II	Distort III	Failures in Distortion
01-30	01-15	01-10	Right aspect, wrong way
31-70	16-50	11-60	Nothing happens
71-80	51-75	61-70	Wrong aspect affected
81-90	76-90	71-90	Raise defect chance 10%
91-00	91-00	91-00	Roll twice on this table

All effects of multiple rolls would be cumulative.

The MU will probably want to raise the infant to maturity, either for sale, use, or most likely as new breeding stock, particularly if he thinks it has successfully taken on a desired feature. If there are no complications arising from defects, this is simply a matter of time and care — oh yes.... and food.... lots of it. A rule of thumb for the cost is 1sp per day per HD per creature. Carnivorous and exotic creatures will be more costly to feed. If you think this is excessive, go and talk to a modern zoo keeper.

Disease is a threat. It varies enormously from species to species and also by the area in which the menagerie is sited, but as a guide, a creature in close proximity to others of any kind has a 10% chance, rolled at intervals of a tenth of its infancy until mature, and thereafter at intervals of a quarter of the time taken to mature, of sickening. For instance, our Griffon, mature at 2 years (100 weeks) has a 10% chance each ten weeks of falling ill, until adulthood, and a roll every 6 months after that. Illnesses are often fatal, but an animal healer or attentive keeper can help. Remember that people with animal empathy and healing magic will rarely become involved with such experiments.

Impatient magic users may not want to wait upon the natural course of maturity, and they have two strong magics to hurry nature on her way, namely the spells **hasten growth** and **age animal**. The best way to get quicker and surer results in the long run is to increase the numbers of breeding stock. On the other hand a big menagerie is harder to hide and more likely to attract attention from angry druids. Also, apart from not having enough spells to cope with all the animals, the MU may need an assistant keeper to take routine decisions. Quite possibly he will appoint a resident keeper anyway if he doesn't want to be tied down to the place, though in a small menagerie he would only need to be there at times of births and matings. In a large and varied

menagerie such events may be going on all the time, and the MU should keep a diary if he doesn't want to be absent at crucial moments. The DM must keep a diary, and I suggest this be kept separate from the main campaign diary as discussed in **IMAGINE™** #14, so as not to clutter the latter up with births and deaths.

Enough of preparations — on with the experiments!

THE MUTATION METHOD

The distortion of unborn offspring is one of the two main experimental techniques. Its difficulty lies in focusing the will accurately on the particular feature of the animal which one wishes to change. To achieve this end, three spells of increasing power have been developed to effect the desired changes. These spells, detailed in the appropriate boxed section, are **Distort Life I, II & III.**

CROSS-BREEDING

There are of course natural half-breeds, like the mule; half donkey and half ass. As is well known, mules are always sterile, but there are other cross-breeds which can reproduce themselves, like those of wolf and dog.

All these are crosses of similar creatures. Many other permutations which one might imagine — the dreaded pig-vole and the much misunderstood wabbit-tiger — are (of course) impossible. At least, in *nature*....

Here we enter the second branch in monster breeding; inducing diverse creatures to mate and making the offspring of the match feasible; twaining. Once again, powerful magic exists to help the MU with this task.

DIAGNOSIS of ASPECTS & DEFECTS

In a new-born creature the results of a **distort** spell, or of inheritance of different parental features, may not be readily discernible. Accordingly, ALL rolls connected with monster breeding should be made by the DM. The MU only sees the results of his work when he diagnoses.

At birth, size will be noticeable as ratio over other young. Colour and covering usually become apparent after a few weeks. All external features will become obvious at some stage before the age of maturity is reached, but many other things will remain hidden, especially genetic defects. Special and magical abilities may need some trigger to provoke their use. A wise MU will put new offspring in cages proofed against everything he can think of, until he knows exactly what he's dealing with. There are spells to help him find out.

INTELLIGENT CREATURES

When a magician comes to experiment with thinking beings he is posed awful questions of morality and responsibility — or would be if he wasn't likely to be Chaotic-Evil anyway. Strangely, druids are less antagonized by experiments on humanoids, but the closer the MU gets to the 'ultimate challenge' — meddling with his own kind — the more likely he is to find his neighbours becoming increasingly agitated....

The principles are much the same when dealing with humanoids. Many of the Aspects are similar, but new ones can be introduced. In the Second Order, height, strength, dexterity and constitution can be altered, and in the Third, charisma, psychological implants and innate magical and special abilities can be introduced.

DEFECTS — HARMFUL MUTATIONS

Whichever method is preferred, the greatest risk facing the creative MU is that of some harmful defect appearing in the offspring. The basic chance of one occuring is 20%. There are a number of modifiers:
+5% per 2% that the birth was premature
+40% if siblings were used as mates (+20% if cousins).
+10% if **distort life II** applied
+20 if **distort life III** applied
plus half the incompatibility total for cross-breeds.

There is also a chance of a new or extra defect developing at the age of maturity. Basic chance is 10%, with the following modifiers:
+5% per 10% of mature age put on by **age** spells.
+1% per month aged by **hasten growth** spells.

Whenever a defect occurs as a result of the above procedure, a roll should be made on the **Defect Table** below, using the relevant column for Distortion or Cross-Breeding experiments (where both apply, use the Distortion column).

Distortion	Cross-breeding	Defect Type	use sub-table
01-40	01-20	Physical	i
41-60	21-50	Psychological	ii
61-90	51-97	Genetic	iii
91-00	98-00	Magical	iv

Sub-table i
01-40 Some aspect of the First or Second Orders (determine randomly)
41-50 Nasty smelling, continuous or periodic
51-80 Susceptible to disease (+ d6 x 5% per disease roll)
81-00 Environmental awkwardness (aversion to light, or heat, etc)

Sub-table ii
01-25 Violent, rabid, crazed
26-70 Listless, death-wish
71-80 Positively suicidal
81-00 Manic depressive or another humanoid insanity

Sub-table iii
01-30 Sterile
31-55 Weak genes, aspects have 25% chance of being passed on
56-70 Crippled genes, 0% chance of aspects being passed on
71-80 Unstable genes, different defect appears in each subsequent generation
81-90 Roll again, defect occurs one generation later
91-00 Roll again, defect occurs after d4 generation delay

Sub-table iv
01-40 A Third Order aspect in some uncontrollable or warped form
41-70 Terrified of magic and magic users
71-90 Hatred and violence towards anything magical
91-00 Some other curse, perhaps involving the experimenting MU as well

In addition to these defects, there is a problem which is handled separately because it is so common. For *all* magically bred creatures there is a chance that some unusual supplement to its diet will be required. For distorted creatures there is a 50% chance of this, for crossbreeds a 20% chance only.

Such special needs become apparent when the creature starts to waste away (though there could be other explanations for this) and the food required can only be discovered by trial and error. This can be abstracted into a week's search with a 25% chance of success, plus 2% per gp expended to a maximum of 75%.

If not discovered the animal will either (50%) die within 3d6 days, or (20%) develop a defect, or (30%) only grow to half normal size and hp.

If discovered and administered, the cost will be 1gp per week per HD. The creature will not need this supplement after it has reached the age of maturity.

The MU shouldn't have to detail things individually, but the DM can add colour to the abstraction; eg, "Well, it hasn't touched the powdered beech bark, or the giant ant entrails, but it did sip a little of that dove's blood you got yesterday, that might be it". Some items might require a minor quest to find.

THE EXPERIMENTER'S SPELLBOOK

The following spells are essential parts of the processes of cross-breeding and mutation. The spells are not intended for general use, and should not be learned by an MU undergoing normal training. However, specialized — and expensive — teaching by an existing practitioner, or the discovery of a spell book containing the magics, will provide the MU with the powers required. Such spell books are normally kept separate from all others, and whilst they will fetch the most extravagant price from the right purchaser, any Good or Lawful cleric — or any other character class for that matter — is going to want to see these 'unnatural' works cast into the fire.

	Level	Components	Range	Casting Time	Duration	Save	Area of Effect
Animal Magnetism	4	VSM	touch	2 hours	1 breeding season	Neg	2 creatures
Distort Life I	4	VSM	1"	1 hour	permanent	none	1 creature
Ritual of Twaining	4	VSM	touch	1 hour	permanent	none	1 offspring
Distort Life II	5	VSM	1"	2 hours	permanent	none	1 creature
Hasten Growth	5	VSM	touch	2 hours	permanent	Neg	1 creature
Opening the Living	5	VSM	touch	3 turns	3 turns	special	1 creature
Revelation of Auras	5	VSM	1"	3 hours	3 hours	special	1 creature
Age Animal	6	VSM	touch	1 hour	permanent	Neg	1 creature
Clone Animal	6	VSM	touch	1 hour	permanent	Neg	1 creature
Distort Life III	6	VSM	1"	3 hours	permanent	None	1 creature

Animal Magnetism
(Enchantment/Charm) Reversible
This raises the mating chance by 5% per level of the MU. It may be cast once per pair per mating season. The material component is orc blood.

Hasten Growth
(Alteration)
This may be cast once per week on any animal. The creature ages by one month instead of one week. The material components are a pinch of spinach and a spoonful of cod liver oil.

Age Animal
(Alteration)
This spell may only be used on creatures of less than humanoid intelligence. It instantly ages them by as much as the MU desires up to 1 year per level of the MU. However, if the caster fails a saving throw, he or she ages by as many months as the creature ages years.

Distort Life I
(Necromantic)
This spell is cast during a pregnancy, and one aspect of the unborn child is altered according to the magic-user's will. Only external features can be changed with this spell. It is very uncertain in operation and the base chance of success depends on the aspect and the manner in which the MU wants to affect it. Some Base chances are listed later, but lots of DM arbitration is required here. If it fails the aspect may change in a way other than that intended, a different aspect may change, nothing may happen, the chance of defects may arise, or a combination of these possibilities may occur (see table opposite). Some changes require two or more generations to manifest themselves fully (these are abbreviated hereafter to 'Gn'). In these cases if there is a successful alteration in an early generation and a failure in the subsequent generation, the partially altered strain is still useful as advanced breeding stock since it carries one generation's worth of change. However, a partial alteration will tend to disappear entirely in three generations. The material component is a silver model of the animal in question (worth 200gp x animal's HD), which must be hammered flat during casting.

Distort Life II
(Necromantic)
As above, but this can be used to alter internal and fundamental aspects. It automatically raises the defect chance 10%. A gold model (worth 600gp x the animal's HD) is substitued for the silver one above.

Distort Life III
(Necromantic)
This spell can bestow special and magical powers on the unborn creature, but the chance of inducing defects is 20% higher if this spell is used. Multiple generation requirements may be (secretly as always) randomly rolled; eg. 'Gd3'. A platinum model (1200 x HD gp) is hammered flat during the process.

Ritual of Twaining
(Alteration, Enchantment/Charm)
Casting this spell during the mating gives a basic 5% chance per level of the MU for the cross-breeding to become feasible (but the normal rolls to see if mating occurs, for still-births; etc, must all still be made). The following adjustments need to be made for compatibility:
Size — per 10% difference in hp — -4%
Limbs — per pair different — -15%
Covering — different — -10%
Type — fish (0), animal (30), bird (50)[1]

[1]subtract difference between bracketed numbers (eg, cross-breeding a haddock and a house-martin suffers a 50% reduction in the chance of success).

The offspring will draw on both parents for characteristics. For each aspect, go through them as listed in the section on Mutations, with a 50% chance of taking after either parent. If it is decided that certain aspects of a certain species are genetically dominant, there can be up to a 75% chance for the dominant aspect to be inherited.

For example, if there were such a thing as a wabbi-lion, it might be white, furry, herbivorous, with 4 limbs, a mane, a quivery nose, long ears, big canine teeth and a manic-depressive disposition. Now you know why even 'successful' crosses die off in the wild!

The Species Traits i-vii (see **Breeding and Raising**) are rolled as for Aspects, each taking after one parent or the other. Size is handled a little differently; it can be anywhere on a range between the two parents' HD (not forgetting the natural +/-10% as well). If cross-mating produces a litter, each one should have all its aspects and size rolled separately.

Revelation of Auras
(Divination)
This gives the MU a 10% per level chance of divining the exact nature of one Aspect of the creature under inspection. The subject must be held perfectly still so that the auras are stable to the inner eye. Any failed roll within 10% of success gives a wrong result, otherwise it just fails. The material component is an eagle's eye, which the mage must swallow.

Opening the Living
(Necromantic, Divination)
More precise knowledge can be gained by an unobstructed view of internal auras. The monster dies as a result of being cut open, but the spell keeps it alive for its duration. Not only does this spell give the MU a 95% chance of correctly reading the aura (all failures being mistakes, not blocks) but also the MU may add 5% to future **distort** spells aimed at that Trait of that species. This aid in focusing future distortions is useful, but discovering the properties of a particular offspring is of little value once it is dead. The material component is a small, sterile scalpel made of silver and platinum, worth 500gp.

Clone Animal
(Necromantic)
This spell is useful to check the results of experiments when using a **opening the living** spell. It will work on any creature of less than humanoid intelligence. The clone will have exactly the same Traits, Aspects and Defects as the original. The material component is 1 pint of blood per Hit Dice of the creature to be cloned.

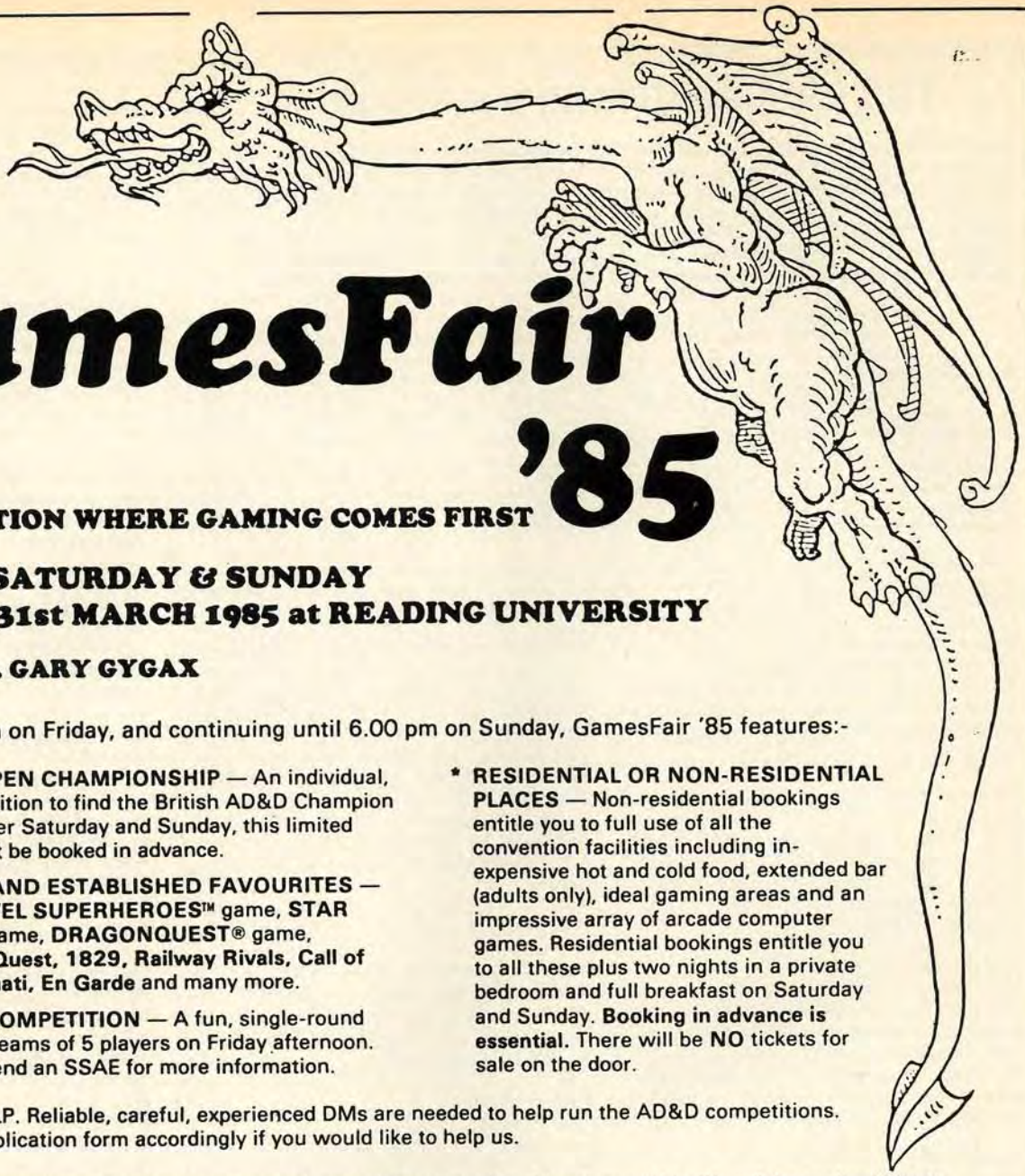
MAGIC, MONSTERS & MENAGERIES IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Barring any psychological problems, monsters raised by an MU will feel some loyalty towards him, and an inventive MU can often find uses or buyers for his 'creations'. I hope however that I have made it clear that these rules are not really concerned with creating new monsters for people to fight. Rather, it is a new pastime for magic users, who may never produce anything enduring on the landscape, but will have a lot of fun and frustration trying! I suggest you give xp for all research efforts, plus bonuses for achievements, like live births.

If you want to introduce an MU in your campaign to the hobby's existence, why not put a **distort life I** or **ritual of twaining** scroll in the next treasure, or better still let him meet and talk with an NPC; perhaps a patron who wants the party to capture some breeding stock for him? Or the party might be involved in a race against time, to stop an evil experiment before it can be unleashed upon a city. You may only get one or two player magic users of sufficient level and inclination to take up these experiments in your campaign, but I can assure you that this is enough to provide a lot of interest and adventures — it's a very exclusive hobby.

May your monsters always multiply!

John McKeown



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Neutrals fighting beside their buddies against a band of orcs and then switching in mid-fight when the orcs start losing would not be popular!

A page for the not-so-experienced adventurer

by Roger Musson

Having now discussed in detail Law, Chaos, Good and Evil, it remains to say something about that in-between alignment, Neutrality. In terms of the character alignment graph that shows the other alignments in the four corners of a square, there are shown five different types of Neutrality; Lawful Neutral, Evil Neutral, Chaotic Neutral, Good Neutral and Absolutely Neutral. Of these, I would contend that the Absolute Neutral position is the most interesting, and also that a further division of Absolute Neutrality is possible.

The four outer bands of neutrality in the alignment graph have little to do with true Neutrality. Basically, they just represent alignment patterns of the sort that would characterise a game played with a two-way alignment system rather than a four-way system. The Lawful Neutral character cares about Law, and just Law. Good, Evil, doesn't matter. If it's Lawful it's okay, if it's not Lawful it's not. And so on for Chaotic Neutral and the rest.

It's when we come to the alignment in the middle that we detect the special characteristics of Neutrality, and the Absolute Neutral is similar in both two-way and four-way alignment systems. But here we come to the important division: between the character who is Neutral in alignment because of passionately caring about Neutrality, and the character who is neutral because of just not caring about anything. And I use here deliberately the distinction between the capital N and the small n.

Let's consider the Neutral with a capital N first. Many players have the prejudice that Neutral characters are a rather colourless lot relative to other alignments. However, the true Neutral is in a complicated and interesting position, living in a world where there is conflict between forces that are diametrically opposed and constantly at war, and believing that both of them are wrong and yet, in a way, both are right. The forces of Law proclaim 'all must be Lawful'; the forces of Chaos counterclaim that salvation can only be achieved through total freedom. The Neutral believes total Law and total Chaos are equally wrong; that both Law and Chaos are necessary; that a balance must be preserved between the two extremes. And similarly for Good and Evil.

The problem is, how is this to be achieved? Obviously, a delicate juggling of position is necessary. The important thing is to prevent one side or the other from winning outright, and this is most simply done by siding with whichever side is doing least well, and then, if the tide turns the other way, switching ally. This might not be easy; one side might not welcome as friends forces that had but recently been fighting on the other side.

From the point of view of the individual player-characters, it is doubtful whether they are obliged to implement this doctrine to its logical conclusion in everyday life — fighting with their Lawful buddies against a band of orcs, and then switching in mid-fight when the orcs start losing. No, they wouldn't be popular. But if there are powerful forces co-ordinating the Cosmic Balance, they might well have need of parties of Neutral adventurers to fulfil tricky missions to foil one of the other alignments getting too much of the upper hand.

But as well as the character who pursues the active and positive cause of Neutrality, there is the other sort of neutral character who has a more negative alignment and just wants to opt out. Is Gondor threatened? That's nothing so long as the character is elsewhere. Does Sauron rally the forces of Evil? Let him. Neutral characters (with a small n) will be obedient to Law when it suits them, and Chaotic in behaviour when there is something to gain thereby. In a way, they are not so much neutral in alignment as non-aligned. Their first, if not their only, loyalty is to themselves, and they campaign for no other cause.

In some early D&D magazines, you will come across monsters described as being of alignment 'Hungry', and this is another word for the sort of neutrality we are discussing here. Your average dinosaur, for instance, though described as Neutral in alignment, doesn't consider the ethical niceties of the need for balance between Good and Evil and the rest, not with a brain the size of a pea, it doesn't. If it moves, eat it — that's the beast's sole guide to conduct, and if an alignment must be described, then 'Hungry' is as descriptive a word as any.

Player characters, I hope, are at least slightly more sophisticated, but the same general point is appropriate. There is normally no need for characters (except for clerical types) to bother their heads about morals or philosophy; they may, and frequently do, follow their own interests without reference to any grandiose view of what is best for the world in general.

It is worth pointing out that there is a great tendency for player-characters to drift in this direction. Examine the guiding principles of most player-characters and see what you find. What is the moral basis of dungeon-bashing anyway? Just because you think orcs are Evil, does that give you the right to go storming into their home, slaying them in cold blood, and making off with all their treasure? Such unprovoked behaviour arguably constitutes robbery and murder — certainly from the orcs' point of view. Is that Good? Is that Lawful? Can any Good cleric condone such things when the orcs might have been converted on hearing the Word of the One True God?

Altogether, the morals of the average adventurer are somewhat open to suspicion. Of the players I have seen, only a relative few have demonstrated a true alignment in any positive sense. The rest have concerned themselves almost exclusively with staying alive, gathering treasure, and gaining experience levels. All non-aligned neutral stuff. It tends to be only in those campaigns where major confrontations of forces are in progress that alignments really come into play to their full extent.

Roger Musson

*Previous **Stirge Corner** themes are detailed below. To obtain back issues see p58.*

#1 & 3: Introduction to rpgs; #4 & 5: Beginning as a DM; #6 & 7: Staying alive; #8: Treasure*; #9: Monsters*; #10: Treasure & monsters*; #11: Time & motion*; #12: Role-playing; #15: Mapping*; #16: Scale; miniature figures; #17: DM-ing equipment*; #18, 19 & 20: Alignments*

**mainly for DMs.*

Please note that #2, 13 & 14 are out of print.

Publishing Superheroes in Britain

HARRIER COMICS

by Martin Lock

Superheroes are an American invention. The USA has given us **Superman**, **Spider-Man**, and hundreds more colourfully costumed characters, and even created **Captain Britain** for us, while the established British publishers have concentrated on **The Beano**, footballers, and the continuing adventures of World War Two.

However, there are quite a few fans of Superheroes in Britain, brought up on the Marvel and DC comics tucked into the bottom of a wire rack in the local newsagents, or the weekly reprint comics that a British off-shoot of the Marvel operation has been publishing for the last ten years. Britain is part of the 'direct sales' system for American comics, since we speak approximately the same language. If you go to a specialist comics and fantasy shop in London, or Birmingham, or Glasgow, or a number of other large cities, you'll find the whole range of American comics, brought over specially by air and sea. Pick them up, and you could easily imagine yourself to be in New York, or Detroit, or Los Angeles....

You will find very little material published in Britain; a few copies of a couple of monthly magazines from British Marvel, using some original British material mixed in with the American reprints, **2000AD** from IPC, and maybe Quality Publications' **Warrior**. The comparison with the 100 or so different comics produced that month by the American companies could not be more striking.

The direct sales system has allowed new companies in America to come onto the scene, and revived the whole comics business. When comics were sold 'on the newsstand', they were distributed along with newspapers, puzzle magazines, and many other periodicals. Neither shopkeeper nor wholesaler knew much about comics, or cared. They were on sale-or-return, so if they weren't sold, they went back. Sometimes the bundles weren't even opened....

Once 'direct sale' was introduced, things changed. A few specialist shops ordered in advance, taking the titles on 'firm sale', with a better profit margin. These people have an interest in selling comics, and there are now more than 3000 comic stores in America. These days, a lot of the major titles are *only* available in this way, and the industry has prospered. A new comic publishing company can tell retailers what is to be in its new title, take firm orders, print, deliver and get paid—finally sharing out the profits among those responsible for the magazine.

Simple? Well, in theory. Launching **Harrier Comics** was far from an easy task. For a start, I can't draw! It wouldn't have been possible without the contacts that I've developed from editing the amateur magazine **Fantasy Advertiser**; particularly Titan Distributors, who are handling the distribution and export, and my long-time friend Dave Harwood, the main artist on **Conqueror**.

That, by the way, is the name of the first Harrier comic. It doesn't feature a Superhero; instead it's an SF title, set five centuries into the future, and featuring a large starship, HMS Conqueror, on a mission of exploration. The series springs from a short strip that Dave and I worked on in 1979, published in a fanzine called **BEM**. At the time, neither of us realised how far the strip might take us, and therefore you will have to forgive the lack of foresight that led to similarities to **Star Trek**. The two have common ancestry in the classic SF stories by Eric Frank Russell, and **The Voyage of the Space Beagle** by A E van Vogt. Had we thought more deeply, we might have avoided calling the main female character Lieutenant Fl'ff, and avoided giving her *those ears*. Dave has cunningly modified them since. I stand by the name of the **Conqueror**, though discovering that the Royal Navy actually had a vessel of that name when it sank the General Belgrano was a bit of a surprise. Using such a 'belligerent' name was meant to be tongue-in-cheek, but it does give a good strong title to the comic.

The story focuses on the HMS Conqueror, with its crew of 500, patrolling the Commonwealth sector of the galaxy. The regular cast are mainly members of the bridge crew: Captain Russell, his first officer Lieutenant Luke, Lt Fl'ff, Ensign Kathlar and Commodore Jenkins, along with Corporal Frank, who began with a fairly minor role which has since expanded. Being the narrator must help him!

Conqueror is in standard comic format, the same size as **X-Men** or **Daredevil**, with colour covers and Black&white interiors. As I write, the third issue is ready for printing, to follow its predecessors into British and American comic shops. Since we can't quite compete with the established American four-colour giants, our low print run means that we end up charging 70p — more than the cheaper American titles, but not bad all the same.

Perhaps more relevant to Superhero roleplayers will be Harrier's second title, currently in development, **Swiftsure**. This anthology should feature a number of different continuing features, by various writers and artists. Lt Fl'ff will get her own series, as befits the most popular member of Conqueror's cast, and a number of new heroes will be presented. One strip, **Rock Solid**, will be by humour artist Lew Stringer, frequent contributor to British Marvel. There is **Jim Dandy in the Underworld** by Stephen Baskerville, with a foppish aristocrat struggling to find his way through his planet's seamiest society; **Forest** by James Hill and Kev Hopgood, with a crisis hitting Atlantis and its farming colony on Earth's second

JUNE 4th, 2492 AD: 10.40 IN THE MORNING, GREENWICH MEAN TIME.
AFTER A SUCCESSFUL OUTWARD TRIP USING THE EXPERIMENTAL ORGILL STARDRIVE, A.P.S. NEWTON WAS ABOUT TO START FOR HOME.
WAS.

moon; there's **Ram, Assassin**, written by me and drawn by Kev Hopgood, starring a female assassin on a lost colony world without any visible law; and there's **Codename: Andromeda**, by Bill W Ryan and Dave Harwood, which features a 26th century Superhero.... though you might not be able to tell that from the first couple of episodes.

Chapter One of Codename: Andromeda opens aboard a starship equipped with a new, experimental stardrive. Kris Prescott was among those present when a small meteor penetrated the heart of the drive, causing an explosion that destroyed the ship, and killed everyone on board. Prescott's lifeless body was just about the largest piece of debris left to drift in the high vacuum of space. A few minutes later, an unknown starship appeared, attracted to the scene by the explosion, and a strange crab-like alien took the flash-fried, freeze-dried corpse on board.

Captain 'Brown' and his crew had never seen a human before; it was only some surviving scraps of clothing that persuaded him that what they had was a member of the crew — not something thrown out of the larder! Carefully, the body was placed in the robo-doc tank. But it was so *different*! Internal skeleton instead of an exo-skeleton.... mainaxis symmetry instead of the powerful pincer-claw balanced by the two more delicate, dexterous arms.... and how was it that the 'skip' capability — the ability to teleport short distances — was no longer evident?

The robo-doc did a pretty good job, even if some purists might argue that it would have been nice to have left restoring consciousness until fairly late on in the regeneration. The robo-doc rebuilt her, and gave her the short-range teleportation talent that it blithely assumed she'd always had.... but, somehow, tying that into a human brain had made something more powerful come together. The final results were not clear at first — and since I've only seen the script for chapter two, what happens afterwards will be news to me too!

I do know that Kris Prescott punches her way instantaneously across the light-years to reappear on earth, reassembling herself from local atoms with a clap of thunder amidst the standing stones at Stonehenge and she does a better job of it than the aliens did, returning herself to normal — at least externally! That hints at a certain degree of power, and it seems likely that she can fly, and, while doing the 'local reassembly' trick, she can use more durable atoms than the traditional carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and hydrogen ones — so she can be pretty powerful. As to who then gives her the codename Andromeda, well, I suppose we'll have to keep reading **Swiftsure**.

Harrier Comics is small, so far, but nevertheless I'm very happy with the support the project has been getting. Established artists like Brian Bolland, Dave Gibbons, Bryan Talbot and John Bolton have very kindly worked on covers for us, without payment, while a number of the younger artists, ones who so far have not managed to get the exposure their work deserves, have rallied round to draw features for us at well below the normal professional rates. Besides the people I've already mentioned, there's Jeff Anderson, who's developing a series as well as volunteering his services as an inker, plus Richard Starkings, doing excellent work as a letterer, and Mark Farmer, **Green Lantern** inker, who's taking on the time-consuming task of providing colour separations for our covers. Heroes all, I say!

We may, in future, bring in other Superhero features, and indeed we do have plans for a more conventional character, based on a fan-created Superhero of a few years ago called **Solarman**, but with a new name.

The trouble is, Superheroes are such an American invention that one stands in a giant, trans-Atlantic shadow working on them in this country. A character like **Judge Dredd**, with a solid SF background, seems more our cup of tea than, for example, **Green Lantern**; while D C Thomson's **King Cobra** is unlikely to attract many fans of **Batman**. Even **Marvelman**, the Superhero star of many issues of the magazine **Warrior**, was directly derived from the Golden Age hero **Captain Marvel**. It was the fact that the American publishers of **Cap** went out of business that caused people in Britain to replace him with a British substitute, even going so far as to re-write and re-draw some Captain Marvel stories for Marvelman. The new stories in Warrior have explained the whimsical, fantastic nature of many old stories rather cleverly, and placed the graceful, ultra-powerful and altogether superior hero against a realistic background.

The same writer and artist team, Alan Moore and Alan Davis, were responsible for Britain's other Superhero, the repatriated **Captain Britain**, in various British Marvel magazines. There they took a different approach, with a more 'mundane' hero, a relatively ordinary person who has been granted extra strength, flying power and stamina, operating in a world of other heroes and super-villains; the 'Marvel Universe', in fact, where all the American characters created by Marvel Comics in America exist.

But anyway, if you do investigate your nearest comics and fantasy shop, look out for **Warrior**, **Captain Britain**, **Conqueror**, and next spring, **Swiftsure**, as well as the imported American comics. I won't say that we're better than the Americans, but we do bring a different approach to comics, one which, I hope, is refreshing.

Martin Lock

*Copies of **Conqueror** are available by post for 75p each from Harrier Comics, 3 Marlow Court, Britannia Square, Worcester WR1 3DP. Please make cheques/postal orders payable to Martin Lock. A six issue subscription costs £4.*

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As reviewed in IMAGINE 18

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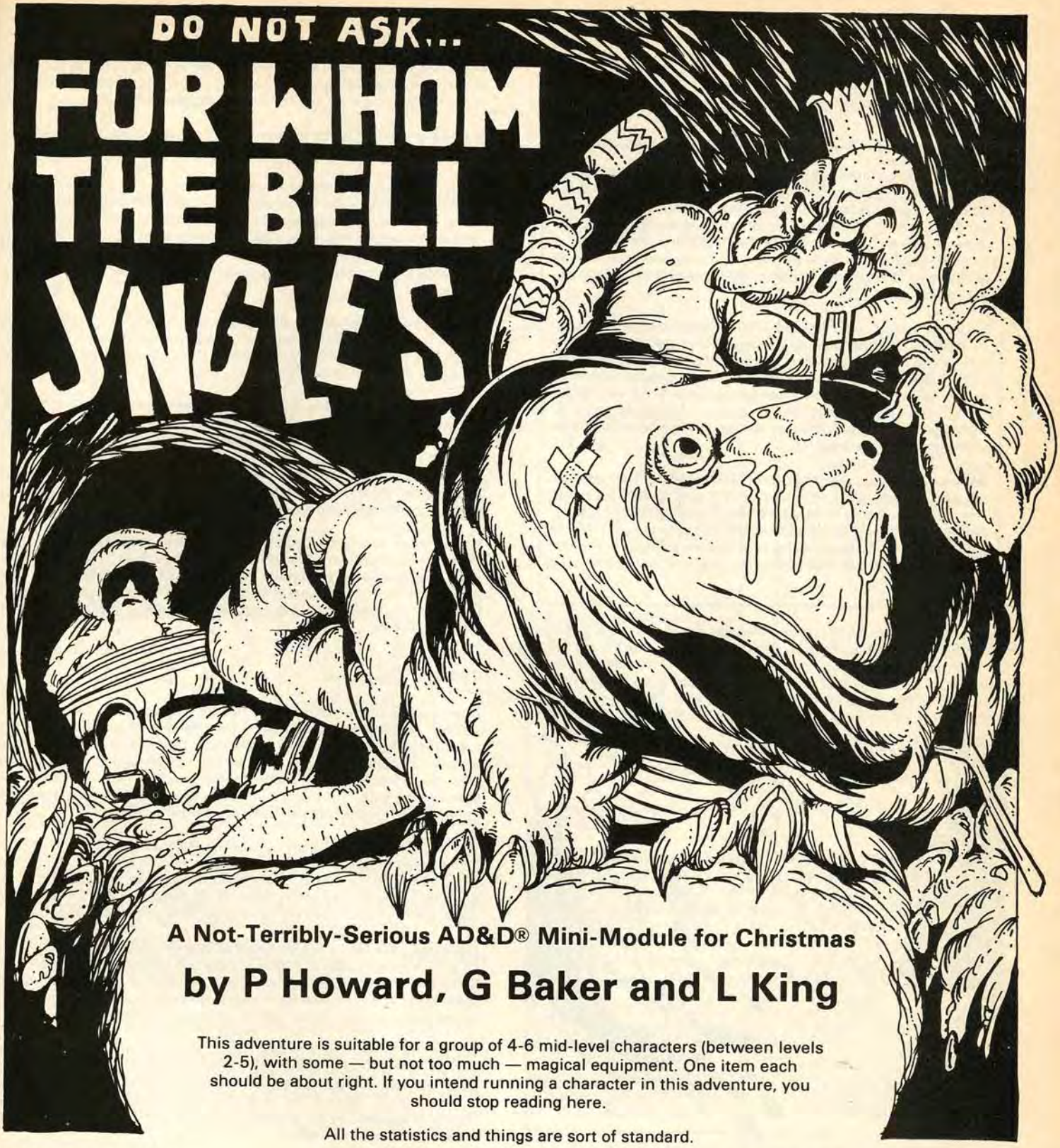


A Not-Terribly-Serious AD&D® Mini-Module for Christmas

by P Howard, G Baker and L King

This adventure is suitable for a group of 4-6 mid-level characters (between levels 2-5), with some — but not too much — magical equipment. One item each should be about right. If you intend running a character in this adventure, you should stop reading here.

All the statistics and things are sort of standard.

DM's Background

Once upon a time there was — and maybe still is — a demon called Nurk. He is quite simply the most unpopular demon of all time, among his fellow demons anyway. A renowned bungler, he hasn't even been invited to the Demons' Festive Roast this year.

This particular story begins just before Christmas when, angered by this latest insult, Nurk was sulking and plotting. He had managed to devise the most dastardly scheme of his career, a plot so fiendish that even his fellow demons would be impressed! Nurk was going to destroy Christmas as the season of goodwill for all time!

He had bought some extremely vicious carnivorous dolls from Algernon, the Snow Queen's nephew, who, dishonest to a fault, had stolen them from under Billy Balrog's Christmas tree. Nurk intended to discredit Santa Claus — and the very idea of Christmas — by persuading the old man to deliver the 'charming little dollies' to lots of innocent children.

Unfortunately for Nurk, Santa realised that something was amiss, and wisely refused to take the dolls. Enraged by yet another failure the incompetent Nurk gathered all of his kobold servitors and marched on Santa's workshop to demand that he deliver the dolls.

But, before Nurk could engage in meaningful negotiations, his kobolds took matters into their own paws. Driven frantic by the presence of so many unarmed wood-elves, they stormed the lodge and killed the lot. In the resulting massacre Nurk managed to capture Santa, and imprisoned the old man in the same caverns he used to store the dolls. Nurk is now thinking again, trying to make up his mind what to do with Santa.

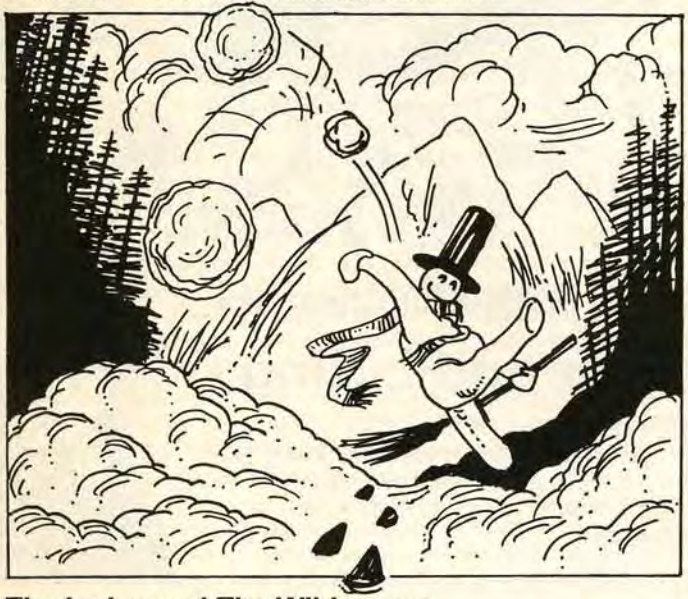
The adventure starts on Christmas Eve. The player characters can have any reasonable equipment (note the restriction on magic items), but should have no more than 4cp (and a brass washer) cash in total. If the players ask for an explanation, all their magical goodies have been pawned to pay for the season of goodwill and the money has been given away to orphans — it's Christmas, right?

Players' Introduction

The DM should read the following to the players at the start of the adventure:

> It is almost Christmas and you are sitting in the White Weasel, a drafty inn far to the north of civilization, and to keep warm you are huddled around the few spitting logs that make up the fire. In your hands you are all holding half-empty mugs of mulled ale, though none of you are eager to finish them and find the money for another. Outside the snow lies deep and crisp and even — work has been hard to find this winter and it is colder than anyone can remember.
>
> Suddenly a small, bald-headed — but obviously wealthy — man rushes into the inn. Pausing to recover his breath he announces that he has a very urgent mission for which he is prepared to pay up to 2,500gp, on the condition that it is completed within 24 hours. He explains that he must get his wife a real yeti fur for Christmas — or she'll kill him! His problem is that the yeti is an extremely rare creature. He also says that he will have the money at the inn tomorrow evening.
>
> Before he can say more, the dulcet tones of his wife shriek from outside 'Wilfred...Wilfred! Hurry up, I'm getting cold out here!' The merchant rushes to the door crying 'Yes, dear! Coming, dear!' As the door bangs shut behind him the voice starts again 'Where have you been? I've been out here for hours waiting for you in this freezing cold. If I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times...'

The barman-owner of the White Weasel believes that a yeti lives somewhere in some ice caverns to the north. He doesn't know where the caverns are himself, but thinks that a wise old man who lives in the lodge about a mile from the inn will know. He will give them exact directions to the lodge, and will tell them that the old man can be recognised by his large girth and long white beard.



The Lodge and The Wilderness

The terrain between the White Weasel and the lodge is barren save for the occasional pine tree, and is covered in snow. Movement in conditions of such cold is very laborious and slow, and it will take the adventurers some two hours to cover the three miles to the lodge. The surrounding wilds are totally — almost supernaturally — quiet, without even the howling of wolves to keep the adventurers company. The only sound to be heard is the crunching of snow as the adventures struggle through the drifts.

When the adventurers arrive at the lodge they will find a charred and smouldering wreck. Around the remains of the building are several dead wood elves, partly covered by the drifting snow. There is no sign of 'a wise old man'.

If the adventurers search the ruins they will find that one of the elves is still alive, but only just. Before he expires, he is just able to whisper 'He's been kidnapped... you must rescue him... the world is...' A broad trail of footprints and disturbed snow leads off to the north, in the direction of some unfriendly looking hills. If the party follow this trail they will arrive at the Ice Caverns after another hour of hard walking.

The only encounter in the wilderness will be with Frosty the Snowman (see below), shortly before the adventurers reach the Ice Caverns.

Frosty is a happy and mischievous creature whose only aim in life is to have lots of (relatively) harmless fun — throwing snowballs (which cause no damage) at passing strangers is just his way of introducing himself. He will do this from a place of concealment. When he finally shows himself he is a large, happy looking snowman dressed in a tall hat and scarf, carrying an old broom. Frosty should be treated as having a charisma of 17.

He will readily aid anyone in distress or those who fight against evil, but he will have no part in hunting his friend the yeti. On the other hand, Frosty is not very friendly with the Snow Dwarf, because he knows that the dwarf cheats at cards.

Frosty the Snowman: AC 3 (wet); MV 9"; HD 5; hp 32; #AT 1; SA see below; SD immune to cold-based attacks, double damage from fire-based attacks; AL CG; S L (8' tall); 250xp.

Frosty can **control weather** (as the 7th level clerical spell) once per day. He can also hide in snow (cf hide in shadows) 80% of the time, becoming totally invisible at distances greater than 10 feet.

Frosty's scarf acts as the equivalent of a **rope of entanglement** and his tall hat is also magical — it raises charisma by 1 or to 17, whichever is most advantageous. His broom is a **wand of snowballs** which can project a snowball equivalent to a **fireball**. This is the only magical function that the broom can perform, but it can still be used as a broom. It has 24 charges.

The Ice Caverns

After the encounter with Frosty, the trail of footprints carries on for another mile and then disappears into the side of a small hill — the entrance to the Ice Caverns. The opening in the hill side is 10 foot square with the inscription 'Ice Caverns' written in Common above it. To one side is a Northern Borough Council tourist map showing the surrounding area. The map is completely white except for one small dot in the centre marked with a large 'You are here' arrow.

The Ice Caverns are made of compacted ice, the floor is smooth compressed snow. Soft, bluish illumination — reflected light from outside — lights the tunnels and halls, so no lights sources are required. Because of the nature of the Caverns (or maybe it's the time of year) some spells will not have their normal effects within the Caverns

Dancing lights, **faerie fire**, **pyrotechnics**, and **colour spray** will cause a small fir tree to appear in addition to the normal lights of the spell. The lights will then settle on the tree which remains for the duration of the spell. **Light** and **continual light** spells will have much the same effect, except that a single light will settle on the top of the tree.

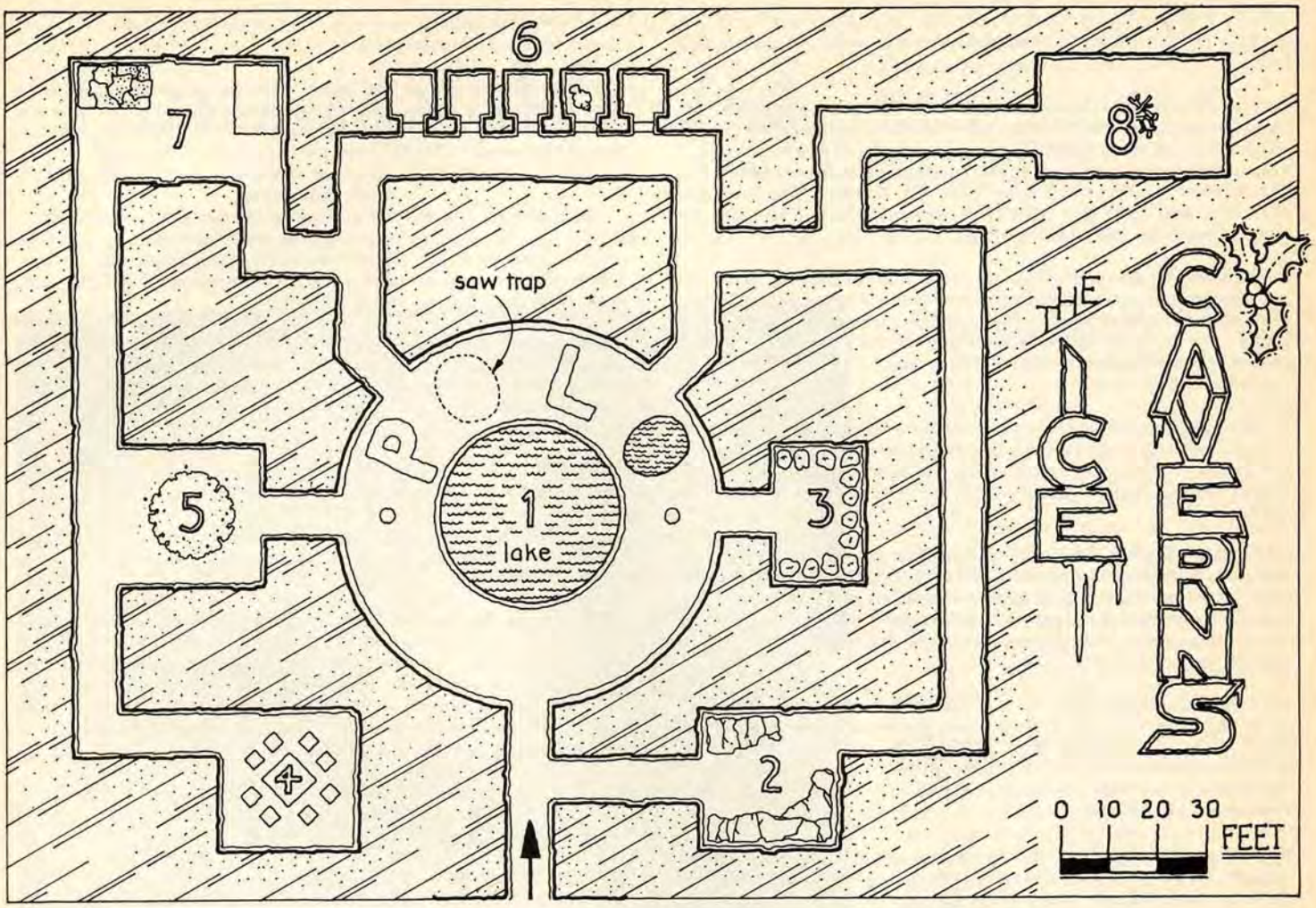
Wandering within the Ice Caverns is Algernon, the Snow Queen's nephew. If the adventurers encounter him (30% per turn) he will join the party, but only in order to be as annoying as possible. The adventurers will hear what sounds like a giant rumbling towards them before Algernon appears, as he is wearing a large pair of boots that make a thudding sound as he walks.

Algernon is a naughty schoolboy who has escaped from his nanny and although he has only been out of her care for a few hours he has already done lots of naughty things. He has stolen Billy Balrog's Christmas presents and sold them to the demon Nurk. He has put a **lurker between** (see page 54) in the yeti's sandwiches and has also tricked him into believing he is to host a non-existent party. If attacked he will squeal loudly for anyone to help him.

Algernon: AC 10; MV 12"; 'Thief' 1; hp 4; #AT 1; D see below; SD spell use; AL Naughty; S 6, I 9, W 9, C 15, D 14, Ch 3; 44xp.

Algernon can cast the clerical spell **feign death** and the magic-user spell **mirror image** once per day. He is armed with a **peashooter** +1 (D 1-2) and a **conker of striking** (automatic hit, D 1-3).

Algernon's only friend is his pet — a baby **rust monster** called Arthur (HD 1, hp 8, 22xp, otherwise as standard). Algernon delights in dropping Arthur into expensive suits of armour when the owner is still inside!



1. The Lake Cavern — This large cavern is circular in shape with a round lake in the middle. The path around the lake is cambered, and a discerning nose may (15%) detect a faint smell of peppermint. Two letters are incised in the floor — a 'P' and an 'L'. There are two other peculiar features on this path: the first is a circular hole which opens to the lake beneath; the second is a 'saw trap'. A **detect traps** spell will indicate its presence. Stepping onto the trap will magically cause a saw to appear under the floor and cut the floor away. The saw will then vanish. A dexterity ability check (roll under dexterity on a d20) must be made by any character standing in the indicated area. Failure indicates that the character has fallen into the lake below through the newly created hole.

The lake is well stocked with dangerous looking fish — easily visible from any point on the path. These are **killer halibut**, second cousins, once removed, to piranha. A failed charisma ability check (a roll of more than the character's charisma on a d20) means that the killer halibut did not like the taste of the character and only inflicted 1-4 points of damage. A successful charisma check means that the killer halibut love the taste and will inflict 8-80 points of damage per round until the character can be dragged clear.

2. The Kobold Room — In here are 12 kobolds, happily mutilating a dead wood elf whilst boasting to each other about the massacre at the lodge. Their laughter can be heard in all the surrounding corridors. One kobold is explaining with pride how he 'kicked the fat guy in the stomach'. They are all wearing bloodstained leather armour and are armed with short swords. The leader also has a shortbow — it is a toy and will break the first time he uses it.

When approached by any party they will be hostile. If asked the whereabouts of the 'fat guy' or the yeti they will claim they know nothing. One will declare that 'they would rather die than tell you anything' unless (75% chance) the others manage to stifle him first. However, in spite of this 'brave' soul, they will not attempt to fight a party obviously stronger than themselves, preferring to give out information.

The room is empty of furnishings, apart from the kobold's rough sack bedding. Each kobold possesses 1-6sp. The wood elf's body has nothing of value.

12 kobolds: AC 7; MV 6"; HD ½; hp 3; #AT 1; D 1-6; AL LE; S S (3' tall); xp 8 each.

3. The Dolls Room — Propped against the walls of this chamber are 12 large bags tied with red ribbons; one has a label which reads 'Merry Christmas, Billy' in Common. Each bag contains a very pretty, dark-eyed china doll — these are the dolls that Nurk wanted Santa Claus to deliver. In the darkness of the bags the dolls are silent and harmless. If exposed to light, the dolls will become animated, attacking with their vicious teeth and knife-like nails. The dolls will continue to attack until they are destroyed or returned to a darkened environment.

These horrible creations are the work of the Snow Queen. She gave them to Billy Balrog as an 'amusing' Christmas present. Algernon stole them and sold them to Nurk, who doesn't know what to do with them.

12 China Dolls: AC 4; MV 6"; HD 3; hp 20 each; #AT 3; D 1-4/1-3/1-3; SD edged and piercing weapons inflict only 1 point of damage, immune to mind-influencing spells; AL N; S S (3' tall); 80xp each.

4. The Snow Dwarf and the Seven Wights — In the middle of this room are a card table and 8 chairs. The only occupant, a white haired dwarf, sits facing the door playing Patience. The dwarf is expensively dressed — he wears a ring of white gold — and apparently armed only with a small dagger. He will invite the players to join him for a game of cards, introducing himself as 'the Snow Dwarf'. Any questioning as to the meaning of his title will bring the response, 'as in the story'. He will become annoyed by any further questioning.

Should the players play a game of cards with him they will discover that he is an obvious cheat. He will not play fair nor will he pay up if and when he loses. If the Snow Dwarf is threatened in any way or thinks he might be attacked he will use the power of his ring. This has seven skulls engraved on its side. Each time the ring is turned a wight will appear and one of the skulls vanish. Up to seven wights may be summoned, after which the power of the ring is exhausted.

The Snow Dwarf: AC 4; MV 12"; Fighter 5; hp 40; #AT 1; D by weapon; AL LE; S 17 (+1, +1), I 13, W 16, D 17, C 18, C 16; 390xp. The Snow Dwarf has a belt pouch containing 100gp.

(Up to) 7 Wights: AC 5; MV 12"; HD 4+3; hp 20 each; #AT 1; D 1-4; SA Energy drain; SD Silver or magic weapons to hit; AL LE; S M; xp 640 each.

5. The Pear Tree — In the centre of this chamber is a pear tree in a large pot. Hanging from the branches of the trees are five golden rings. On the floor are the remains of a partridge, a turtle dove, a french hen, a calling bird, a goose and a swan. All have been mauled to death. Amid the feathers are banners saying *'Free the Turkey!'*, *'The Turkey is Innocent!'* and *'This is a PEACEFUL demonstration'*. The rings are magical and have the following effects:

I. Drummers Drumming: When this ring is worn a uniformed drummer boy appears and immediately begins drumming. Anyone within 20 feet must save vs spells or march in the direction they are facing. After two rounds the drummer will disappear and all the marchers stop. The drummer will reappear unless the ring is taken off. It has a total of 12 charges.

II: Pipers Piping: When this ring is worn an elven piper appears and begins to play. All who hear the music and do not save against magic will fall asleep for two turns, after which the piper vanishes. There are eleven charges in the ring, and each time it is turned another piper will appear.

III. Lords-a-Leaping: This ring is slightly larger than the others. When it is put on a **10th level Fighter** (AC 2; MV 9"; 60hp; #AT 1; D 1-8) appears. He will stay to help any 'good' party for one turn and then vanish. The ring has ten charges. By placing it on other fingers the fighter will return for one turn for each charge used. He will not return if slain; his wounds heal at the normal rate.

IV. Ladies Dancing: This ring is dented and if worn nine ballerinas appear and start to dance. Eight are very pretty but one is ugly and fat. She is a **harpy** (AC 7; MV 6"/15"; HD 3; hp 15; #AT 3; D 1-3/1-3/1-6; SA Singing and charm; AL CE; S M; xp 190). Once a character is charmed — apparently engrossed in the ballet — the harpy will strike. The dance lasts for one turn.

V. Maids-a-Milking: When the ring is first placed on a finger a maid appears, sitting on a stool and vainly attempting to milk her cow. The maid is having no luck because the cow is a dummy, hollow in the middle. An intelligence ability check (roll intelligence or less on a d20) means that the cow has been recognised as such. Inside the cow are two **xvarts** (AC 7; MV 6"; HD 1-1; hp 4; AT 1; D 2-5; AL CE; S S; xp 9 each) who have travelled from a distant land in this **cow of teleportation**. They have been summoned by the ring by mistake. Anyone standing near the cow will hear the one of the xvarts complaining that someone is tampering with the udder, while the other replies that it is better than being in a balrog's pantry. The entire group will vanish after one turn.

Any of the remaining seven charges will summon a normal cow and maid. Each pail of milk from these cows (if milked by its maid) is the equivalent of a **potion of healing**. The maid remains for the one turn it takes to milk the cow, then disappears leaving a perfectly ordinary cow and a pail of 'milk'.

6. Death Row — The cells on 'Death Row' all have transparent ice doors, barred on the outside by massive icicles. Only one cell is occupied, by a very corpulent turkey — the yeti's Christmas dinner.

The turkey will plead with the adventurers to save him from the dinner table. If they agree, he will tell them where the yeti hides his treasure (358 wolves' teeth — see below). Getting the turkey out will not be easy since the cell door is only 3 feet in width, and the turkey is 3' 6" wide even when he breathes out.

The turkey will squeal loudly (this will not attract anyone's attention, but don't tell the players that) at any attempt to pull it through the door (roll as though attempting to break down a door). Chipping away enough ice to get him out will take 1 turn. Should the players get him out he will not stop complaining about all the hardships he has had to endure.

The Turkey: AC 10 (tender); MV 3"; HD 4; hp 25; #AT 1; D 1-2; SA Boredom, save vs spells at +2 or fall asleep for 5 rounds due to the extreme dullness of the turkey's conversation; AL N; S Fat; xp 110.

7. The Yeti's Room — This is the home of the yeti who lives in the caverns, although he will always be outside when the adventurers arrive. In one corner of the room is the yeti's bed of wolf skins. These are worthless and smelly. Underneath the bed is the yeti's treasure hoard of 358 wolves teeth, a testimony of his fighting prowess but otherwise quite useless.

Around the walls hang several paintings, aged portraits or the yeti's family, and an embroidered motto: in yeti it reads *'Home, Sweet Home'*.

In the opposite corner is a table made of ice. On it are four glasses and a decanter of sherry, a plate of mince pies, a plate of sandwiches (in one of which is hidden a sinister **lurker between**) and a number of scrolls. They are all addressed to 'Mr Yeti' and are in Common. They read:

Dear Mr Yeti, Will be pleased to attend your party on the 24th.
Yours, Billy Balrog
Dear Mr Yeti, Thanks for the invitation for the 24th. Look forward to seeing you. Morris Mindflayer
Dear Mr Y, See you on the 24th!!! Trevor Troglodyte.

There are other acknowledgements from Ernie and Eddie Ettin, Sally Succubus, Cecil Cyclops and Sue Monster.

All the scrolls have been placed here by Algernon as a practical joke. He has tricked the yeti into thinking that he is about to play host at a party for all these people. The yeti, having fallen for it, is currently out looking for extra food. However, he would dearly like to get his hands on the person who arranged the party.

There is a 5% chance (cumulative) per round that the yeti will return once the adventurers have begun exploring his room.

Lurker Between (or Spam Monster): AC 26 (always gets bitten), Move 0"; Hit Dice NA; hp NA; #AT 1 per bite; SA see below; AL N; S Fairly Dinky; xp NA.

These terrible monsters are indistinguishable from luncheon meat. They hide (90%) in ordinary food and wait to be eaten. Each time it is bitten it will attack, from the inside! It automatically causes 1 hit point of damage and the victim must roll under his or her constitution on a d100. Failure indicates that the victim is violently ill for 1-10 rounds. Only Vikings are immune to this attack — they value the creature as a rare delicacy and will pay up to 20gp for a fine specimen.

The Yeti: AC 6; MV 15"; HD 4+4; hp 36; #AT 2; D 1-6/1-6; SA paralyzation if surprises opponents, squeeze for 2-16 on a 20; SD impervious to cold; AL N; S L (8' tall); 615xp.

8. Nurk's Abode — This chamber is completely devoid of any furnishings — Nurk forgot to bring any! Nurk, a bald, overweight and wrinkled Type I demon, is crouched over a pile of wet twigs, attempting to light them. He is having his usual lack of success. In one corner of the room, tied up but asleep, is a fat old man dressed entirely in red — Santa Claus. His face is hidden beneath a long white beard.

Nurk (Type I Demon): AC -2; MV 12"/18"; HD 8; hp 50; #AT 1; D by weapon; SA see below; SD see below; Magic Resistance 80%; Int Incompetent; AL Off Centre; S L (more than 8 feet tall); 1200xp.

Nurk fights with a broken club which gives him splinters. This causes him to fumble and miss his target 90% of the time. Once per week Nurk is able to use the following: **pyrotechnics**, **produce flame**, **wall of fire**, **polymorph self**, **confuse** (this only affects himself), **fireball** (6d6), **symbol of pain** and **symbol of fear**. However, as he can never usually remember the spells, they have only a 10% chance of working. Like most demons, Nurk has the ability to gate in other demons, but as no self-respecting demon would be seen in Nurk's company they will simply tell him where to go and teleport away.

Santa Claus: AC -10; MV 9"; HD 10; hp 100; SD See below, AL Very Nice; S M (but fat); S 14, I 18, W 19, C 19, D 12, Ch 20 (25 for pixies, wood elves and faerie folk) 3350xp.

If anyone attempts to attack Santa Claus they must save vs spells. Failure means that the character in question must suffer the effects of the 8th level magic-user spell **symbol of hopelessness.** Santa also radiates a **sphere of happiness**. All characters within 20 feet must save vs spells or become very happy and friendly with everyone. Once characters step outside the sphere they will return to normal, but will have to save again if they re-enter the circle.

Santa will reward anyone who frees him by presenting them with a harmless, but magical toy, eg **Elven rollerskates** (movement 18" in silence); **Cardboard armour** +1 (AC13), an **Otto's Irresistible Teddy Bear** (save vs. death magic or hug the teddy for 1-10 rounds); **Tenser's Floating Jellybaby** (when eaten acts as a **potion of levitation**).

Credits: **Design: P Howard, G Baker and L King**
Cartography: Paul Ruiz
Art: Tim Sell

Fantasy Media

*Colin Greenland, author of **Daybreak on a Different Mountain** and co-editor of SF magazine **Interzone**, reviews the latest additions to the fantasy/SF media.*

Film director Neil Jordan is also a talented writer; his last novel, **The Dream of a Beast** (Chatto, £2.95), described an eerie metamorphosis that strongly foreshadows his new film, **THE COMPANY OF WOLVES** (Palace, 18). Angela Carter has adapted her original short story for this dark, hypnotic fantasia where dreams melt into dreams. Young Rosaleen (Sarah Patterson) is warned by granny (Angela Lansbury) to beware of the werewolf, whose eyebrows meet in the middle. But this Little Red Riding Hood is eager to awake the beast in man, and is a match for him when she does.

It's a Freudian fairytale with deliciously gruesome transformation scenes and deep, vigorous imagery, but not without twee patches.

RED DAWN (MGM, 15) is a self-congratulatory little B-picture, the sort America does so well. Set in the early months of World War Three, it's a loving chronicle of juvenile heroism in Russian-occupied Colorado. Schoolkids caught behind enemy lines become crack guerillas overnight, slaughter nobly, die even more so. Nice scenery, shame about the movie.

*'Professional staff on call 24 hours a day to serve all your supernatural elimination needs. No job is too big, no fee is too big. Call **GHOSTBUSTERS**.'* (Columbia, PG). Sacked in university funding cuts, three New York parapsychologists offer their services as hi-tech exorcists on the open market, only to discover that 'this city is headed for a disaster of Biblical proportions!' Sixth-century deity Zool is on His way back to a rooftop temple designed for Him by a crazy architect — and Dr Venkman (Bill Murray)'s girlfriend's apartment is the transdimensional gateway. America's surprise hit of the year, this lax but likeable comedy had me laughing at the daftest lines.

Anyone who cares about SF films should badger librarians or gift-givers for a copy of **The Aurum FILM ENCYCLOPEDIA: Science Fiction** (Aurum Press, £17.95). From 1895 (a one-minute French novelty called **The Mechanical Butcher**) to 1983 (21 entries, including **Return of the Jedi** and **Wargames**), Phil Hardy patiently catalogues over twelve hundred titles, complete with stills, plot summaries, principal credits and background information. Films from twentysix countries are included, so you can find out all about not only **Metropolis** or **Things to Come**, but also **Godzilla Versus the Bionic Monster**, or **A Martian in Paris**, or (my favourite title) **Jesse James meets Frankenstein's Daughter**.

Robert Asprin's **TALES FROM THE VULGAR UNICORN** (Penguin, £1.95) is a second anthology of stories from the disreputable port of Sanctuary, a sequel to **Thieves' World**, which inspired the Chaosium game of the same name. Seven authors have each created a character and written her or him an adventure, involving other people's characters, locations, plot elements and so on.

Not so good as volume 1, partly because of space wasted by Philip Jose Farmer and A E van Vogt, two burnt-out stars if ever there were; but Lynn Abbey is on form, and the overall idea continues to be entertaining. What would anyone say to a Pelinore anthology?

The prospect of orbital space colonies is an attractive one. Every political, religious or ethnic group could bid for an environment of its own. But would it stop us blowing each other up on Earth? Not according to Joe Haldeman, whose **WORLDS** (Futura, £2.25) is the story of Marianne O'Hara's educational trip from orbital New New York to old Earth, and her brush with an international terrorist conspiracy that nearly kills her — and everyone else.

In **WORLDS APART** (Futura, £2.25) Haldeman describes the terrestrial aftermath: two thousand million survivors, prey to a virus that kills everyone over twenty. What can O'Hara and the rest of the New New Yorkers do?

It feels perverse to say that a series about the near extinction of the human race seems uneventful, but somehow it does. The futuristic detail is fascinating, but Haldeman relates it in a casual, rambling way that dilutes much of its drama.

The city in **PROTECTORATE** (NEL, £1.95) by Mick Farren sounds familiar. The decadent rich sprawl smugly in their gleaming towers, while the Lower Dwellers teem in desperate and mucky poverty, far below. Alien overlords, the Wasps, control humanity absolutely but apathetically. Meanwhile rumour says that a strange young prophet is abroad in the Lowers, doing forbidden and impossible things. Farren strolls once more down these mean streets with his hands in his pockets, cheerfully pessimistic. He quite likes it all, really. No great writer, Farren, but nobody's fool either, and that's quite valuable these days.

Colin Greenland

Watch this space for more fantasy/science fiction media reviews in 1985...

SOAPBOX

THE HARDWARE & SOFTWARE OF GAMING *by Mike Lewis*

There are some startling similarities between the world of computing and the world of roleplaying, and some are worth a closer look.

The most successful of all gaming companies is TSR. There can be no doubt about this, their turnover is largest, they sell the most popular game; they totally dominate the rpg market. To a lot of people the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game *is* roleplaying.

Now, to a lot of people, IBM *is* computing. They dominate the market, perhaps not with technological revolutions, but they have a strong reputation, and an image of infallibility. When IBM decided to start producing personal computers, people sat up and took notice, and others began to follow suit, with IBM compatibles. IBM doesn't offer anything very new, but it does offer machines that work, are dependable and have fully debugged systems software — more than most companies can say.

Each of IBM's successive generations of mainframes have been built around the same hardware configuration and architecture developed originally in the '60s, with improved performance. There is no reason to doubt that IBM will be taking the same approach to its next generation of personal and micro computers. It makes sense, basing new developments on a tried and trusted product to meet the new needs of the market.

Now consider TSR. Their original product was the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game, the first roleplaying games system. This was followed by the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game, Basic DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, Expert DUNGEONS & DRAGONS and now the Companion Set. Each of these products is based on the same inner core — the same successful formula which makes the world's best-selling rpg. TSR do not produce radically new products, they build on previous, successful products and known game formats.

TSR and IBM have something else in common: they are aware of the other requirement of a system if it is to succeed — support. You don't buy a business computer without suitable business software to run your company for you. Nor are you likely to buy a computer from a new, fly-by-night manufacturer, or one with a bad reputation for support. Where your business is as stake you cannot afford to take risks of this sort. This is why IBM still sells a lot of IBM PCs, despite the cheaper and more advanced rivals being produced.

The same is partially true of rpg systems. Now that they are spreading in popularity beyond the hobbyist and obscurist stage, to be a pastime accepted by the general public (as computing has done), they are reaching a different audience. The new era of gamers won't want a system that is incomplete, that doesn't tell you exactly what you have to do. They also won't want to have to write their own 'software'. The AD&D® game sells because it has support in the form of modules, supplements, magazine articles and scenarios.

Yet consider the other companies in the rpg market, and the systems 'hardware' they have on offer. Some of it is very good; it is neater, easier to play, perhaps even better than AD&D (though that is a purely subjective opinion). Why doesn't it sell as well as, or even approaching the level of, AD&D and the corresponding family? The major reason, I feel, is lack of product support and back-up; and perhaps a slight feeling of unreliability from some companies.

Consider FGU, and their excellent range of games for the roleplayer looking for a detailed and complex system. The hardware is good, well thought out, with fewer inconsistencies than AD&D and a greater opportunity for true roleplaying. But — and it is an important but — there is no 'software' support. **Bushido** is popular, yet it has just one scenario available — with a second promised for over a year. **Chivalry & Sorcery** has only two scenario packs and needs more support than a system like Advanced, due to its complexity. And so on. Selling a games system like this is like asking the purchaser of a computer to accept that there is only one program for his system. You only have to consider the fate of the Aquarius, COMX 35, etc, computers with little or no software, to realise that this situation is untenable.

There is also the question of back-up and continued support for the company's product. The D&D family of games are well supported by TSR and you can be sure that there will be a regular flow of new modules, new rules and modifications available for your system. Due to the status of the system you are investing your money in, you can be sure that TSR will continue to support it, and that it won't fade away overnight, or be sold off.

Yet, this is what Chaosium have done to the **RuneQuest** system — probably the most popular fantasy games system after D&D. They have sold the system to Avalon Hill, with a resulting massive price hike in the USA, and an incredible increase in price for this country of around 500%. Many people have predicted that this will lead to the death of RQ in the UK, as it will stop the game selling to new gamers in anywhere near the same numbers; and quite honestly I think they are right. Chaosium have killed off their most successful product and betrayed the trust that fans of RQ placed in their system; and no matter what the reason, this is going to damage their reputation.

Consider the situation — should I now invest time and energy, to say nothing of money, in another new Chaosium product? If, after I've been playing in a campaign for a year, they then decide to sell this game off, I will be stuck with a considerable investment in a system which will be out of the reach of most people. This will mean a gradual decline in the support for the product, fewer scenarios available, more expensive 'software', fewer magazine articles and far fewer new players entering the system. You only have to look at the fate of **DragonQuest** to realise what this means.

However, if I base my new game campaign on AD&D or another TSR product; even with changes to it, I can be sure it will still be around in a year's time. I can be certain of finding players willing to play the game, who have copies even, and I will be certain of finding new players who can afford to invest in their own copies of the game. Which choice would you make? I may not like the TSR game I have chosen, but at least I can be sure of playing it.

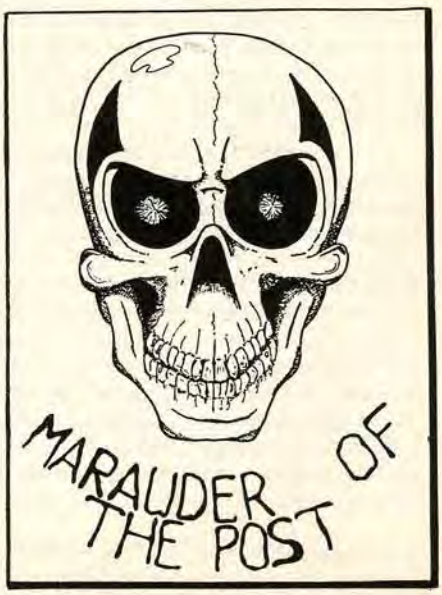
It strikes me that Chaosium and other companies would benefit from a study of the computer market, and they could also learn a lesson from TSR about supporting their own products. Otherwise, TSR and AD&D are going to continue to dominate the games scene as IBM and Cobol have dominated the computer market, and any computer professional can tell you how that has led to stagnation. We don't want that for the games market do we?

Press Cuttings

Pride of place this month has to go to **MAD POLICY 100**. Very few zines reach the magic one-hundredth issue and Richard has to be congratulated for achieving it. The issue follows the traditional approach and contains a potted history of the zine through its years since MP1 appeared on 11th August 1972. The history makes fascinating reading as a history of the development of the postal hobby as well as a recollection of the ups and downs of MP itself. Good luck with the next 100 issues Richard!!

Having passed the 100 mark 19 issues ago and still going strong is **GREATEST HITS** — Pete Birks' communication with the world. It still contains the well-written book, music and film reviews which have made it one of the best 'chat' zines around, plus games such as **Mogul, Trainer** and **Diplomacy**. Over halfway there is **NMR! 54**, which contains letters, chat and games as ever and includes Brian Creese on the story behind his IMAGINE magazine **Chainmail** column on PBM games. **TTYF INTERNATIONAL 24** celebrates the wedding of one of the editors with a ball&chain cover and offers a report of the wedding. Lots of discussion of politics and the miners' strike, heavy stuff for the usually light TTYF. This is balanced by discussion of Greek background in frp games, letters, and the usual games. **Marauder of the Post** is the latest title for **MASTERS OF THE PRIME**, and it still offers **Diplomacy, Baseball Wars** and **Judge Dredd**. **HOPSCOTCH 45** is an unusually thin issue, but offers the same wide selection of postal games as ever.

WALAMALAYSIA GAZETTE is padded out this time by reprinting cartoons galore from **Punch** and **Mad** and manages a staggering 18 pages! Some of them even have **Diplomacy** or **Dungeon!** games on. Trev Mendham's **SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL** continues to be thin but

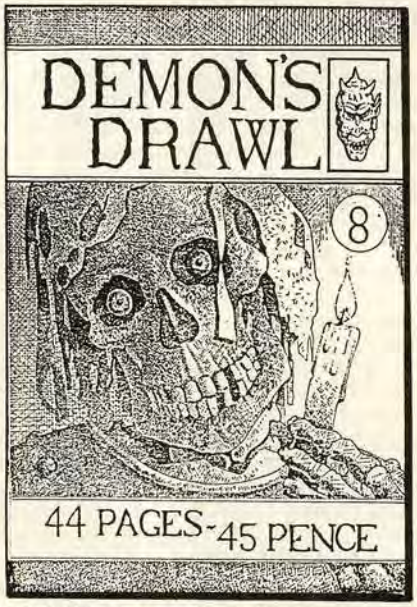


informative with plenty of hobby and games industry news — still the best place to check up on all the news.

THE SECOND FIVE YEAR PLAN 1 is the new title for **The Malkuth Scripts** from Denis Jones. He claims a dislike of the occult and witchcraft as a reason for changing the name. The appearance has improved but the range of contents is still pretty poor. Postal games are on offer, including several of Denis' own; but he needs to brush up his spelling and writing before the zine becomes a reasonable one. **SWANSEA WITH ME 13** (the Matt Williams one!) parodies Mad Policy on its cover rather poorly and fails to reach the standard of MP inside. There are some games reviews, games and a fair amount of waffle, but Matt seems to have lost the endearing character that TUFTY had by his change to mimeo. Perhaps he'll settle down when he's more used to the production method? Graham Staplehurst offers almost the same thing as Matt Williams in his **THE WINDS NINTH QUARTER**, but does it with much more style and content. TWIQU (as it is known) is a communication from Graham to his friends and anyone who's interested, without pretending to be anything more. It offers his and others' thoughts on subjects that interest them, as well as reviews, chat and the odd postal game. Everything a good personal zine should be! This issue also has **MONOCHROME** — a personal zine from Robin ap Cynan attached, mainly about cars. It's well written, if a little pompous in style.

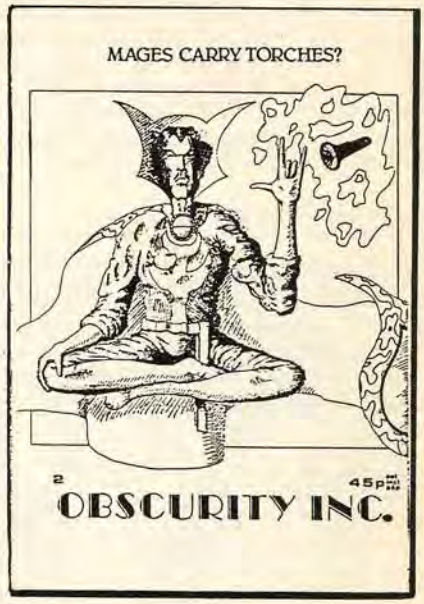
SCAN have dropped us their latest issue, #36 according to their own weird numbering system, and it nicely parodies various comic targets as well as offering articles on 'How to Train Your Tarantula' and **D&D** advice for people without pop-up toasters! Heavily recommended for everyone with a sense of humour. And if you want to find out about all the other comic zines available then there is no better place than **FANTASY ADVERTISER**. The latest issue unmasks Jim Shooter, discusses Doonesbury and American Flagg as well as offering all the news on comics and SF, plus letters, reviews, etc. It's still a necessity for any comic fan.

DEMONS DRAWL 8 leads off the frp zines, and it is still improving in leaps and bounds — from simple beginnings... This issue offers a wide range of articles for frp, as well as letters, discussion, and the first postal games to start. At 44 pages it is also excellent value for money.



IMAZINE 7 sees Paul Mason sticking with the same title for two issues in a row — a minor miracle! Paul did say he'd put so much effort into the title that he couldn't bear to use it only once! As well as the satirical articles and advertising spoofs, there are the usual intelligent discussions of frp games, a convention report and plenty of reviews. Again excellent value for money.

DAGON 3 marks the relaunch of this **Call of Cthulhu** zine, which virtually folded after issue two due to lack of support and large losses. So if you play CoC and want some new material, give Dagon some support — it features a good scenario, a comic adaptation of an H P Lovecraft tale and an article on British gun laws. **SPECTRAL VISIONS** is a brand new zine, and superbly produced in A4 size, with plastic protective cover!! The zine is a little short on reading material, but offers plenty of **AD&D** monsters, demi-gods, a scenario and a new character class as well as some very nice art. Certainly a very promising start for a new zine. **NORST CLAW** is also new, but looks terrible next to Spectral Visions. It is poorly laid-out, with articles covering **AD&D** scenarios, races, etc. The producers of the zine also claim to be producing **Time Masters**, a new rpg system. I only hope they improve production before releasing it!



OBSCURITY INC is on issue two, and the product of the Grand Edinburgh Adventuring Society. Apart from being double-spaced throughout, it is very nicely done, and contains Advanced Pillocks and Popstars (almost an rpg), articles on magic, an AD&D scenario and a rather poor cartoon strip. Worth looking through, though. **DRAGONFIRE** is a new zine to me, but has reached issue 22 already. It is produced by Manchester Grammar School Fantasy Wargames Group, and is certainly a step above most school club productions. There is the continuing set of Science Fiction rules, pieces on comics, AD&D, computer games and another poor comic strip; also a short Bob Shaw interview. Perhaps the zine is a little limited by its school production, but it doesn't match up to the other frp zines available at the moment. It should improve now that it's 'come out in the open' though.

Mike Lewis

Contact Addresses

DAGON, Carl Ford, 11 Warwick Road, Twickenham, Middlesex TW2 6SW (55p); **DEMON'S DRAWL**, Jeremy Nuttall, 49 Longdown Rd, Congleton, Cheshire; **DRAGONFIRE**, Jez Keen, 1 Glenfield Road, Stockport, SK4 2QP (30p); **FANTASY ADVERTISER**, Martin Lock, 3 Marlow Court, Britannia Square, Worcester WR1 3DP (50p); **GREATEST HITS**, Pete Birks, 65 Turney Road, London SE21 7JB (50p); **HOPSCOTCH**, Alan Parr, 6 Longfield Gardens, Tring, Herts HP23 4DN (40p); **IMAZINE**, Paul Mason, 16 Corncrake Close, Sutton Coldfield, W Midlands B72 1HY (50p); **MAD POLICY**, Richard Walkerdine, 144 Stoughton Road, Guildford, Surrey GU2 6PG (45p); **MASTERS OF THE PRIME**, Bryan Betts, 36 Ingestre Road, Hall Green, Birmingham (40p); **NMR!**, Brian Creese, 256 Canbury Park Road, Kingston on Thames, Surrey KT2 6LG (45p); **NORST CLAW**, Peter North, 29 Latchford Road, Heswall, Wirral L60 3RN (45p); **OBSCURITY INC**, A Keen, Kitchener House, 6 Gordon Terrace, Edinburgh EH16 5QH (55p); **SCAN**, John Freman, 126a Greaves Road, Lancaster LA1 4UW (30p + p&p); **SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL**, Trevor Mendham, 53 Towncourt Crescent, Petts Wood, Kent BR5 1PH (5 for £1); **SECOND FIVE YEAR PLAN**, Denis Jones, 22 Beechhill Rd, Eltham, London SE9 1HH (?);**SPECTRAL VISIONS**, Mark McLean, 9 Hill Walk, Nashe Way, Fareham, Hants PO15 6NF (?); **SWANSEA WITH ME**, Matt Williams, 24 Moor St, Coventry CV6 6EQ (40p); **TAKE THAT YOU FIEND**, Kevin Warne, 48 Boscombe Avenue, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 1JG (35p); **TWIQU**, Graham Staplehurst, 62 Church Road, Harlesden, London NW10 (?); **WALAMALAYSIA GAZETTE**, Dave Thorby, Flat 63, Cliffords Inn, Fetter Lane, London EC4.

Letters

*Twenty-one today; twenty-one today. Welcome to the IMAGINE magazine 21st issue party. Come in, sit down, have a drink. Oh, didn't you realise it was a 'bring a bottle' do? Never mind, this is still the right place to air your views about any subject other gamers might find interesting. Just send your contribution to: **IMAGINE** magazine (letters), The Mill, Rathmore Road, CAMBRIDGE CB1 4AD.*

* * * * * *

A little while ago, I dropped a small hint that it might be good if a few of you let us know what you think of our 'culture specific' issues, where we concentrate on one background, like the Celts or the Egyptian milieu. A few readers had written in to say that they couldn't see how the AD&D game and cultures like the Egyptian came together. Here's some of the response we had.

Chris Fardon, Leeds: Personally, I'm in favour of covering different cultures for incorporation into frps. Not only did #16 and #17 provide good introduction into Egyptian and Celtic myth and magic, but they also provided inspiration for further development. Contrary to Duncan Harris' belief, Egyptian culture — or any other background, for that matter — does not require a system totally removed from the D&D game. The very appeal of the D&D game lies in the fact that anything is possible, and the only restriction is the imagination. Furthermore, Egyptian culture is not anachronistic with regard to the ideals of D&D or Runequest. In fact, much of the inspiration for frps came from the mythology and history of ancient cultures, as well as from fantasy literature. I'll look forward to the Norse and Far Eastern specials. May I also suggest features on the Romans and Greek myth — there must be lots of scope there. And what about the possibilities of other civilizations, like the Inca, Aztec and North American Indian?

Victoria Kassner, London: There are a couple of famous sayings: 'One man's meat is another man's poison', and 'You can't please all of the people all of the time.' Both these seem to apply to the alternative cultures argument. It seems to me that the idea is to use the *flavour* and *values* of different milieux, rather than just saying 'by the way; you've just been teleported to Ancient Egypt....' Surely a throne-room laden with silk and satin, precious jewels, heady perfume and a dozen dancing-girls can be exotic in itself without being labelled "property of Baghdad".

Jonathan Smith, Oxford: Celtic/Egyptian specials are definitely not a waste of space. I'm looking forward to the Norse Special.

Andy Kent, Sheffield: Many people seemed to dislike the Celtic and Egyptian articles as they didn't fit into their campaigns. All I can think is that they must have pretty limited campaigns! To assume that in a centre of civilization the only humans will be from within a 100 mile radius is pretty dull. With spells like **wish, astral spell, phase door, wind walk, fly**, etc, as well as sturdy transport like pegasi, griffons, and hippogriffs will have representatives of many continents present; not to mention slaves from exotic conquered nations. And they will all have their own customs, gods and languages. So let's have more; African, Chinese, etc. Think Cosmopolitan!

*That's just what Don says to us when we talk about circulation. The above seems to be a pretty heavy imbalance of 'yeas' over 'nays', so we can all breathe a sigh of relief and get on with the next in our series of **Around the World In 80 Issues**. The next background to feature in this way will be the Far East – not just the old stalwart of Japan, but also Indonesia and other parts of the region. Sharpen up your samurai swords!*

*On a vaguely connected subject, here are a few observations about **Pelinore**. In general, this campaign world has really taken off. Not everyone is using it complete; we have heard of a great many players who are making use of individual elements for their own campaign – the buildings from the City League have been particularly popular in this regard. More recently, there has been a broadening of the material we've published about Pelinore, both in the **IMAGINE Magazine Special Edition** and the **Law and Order** article in #19, written with great skill by.... oh, whatsisname....*

Jonathan Smith: Pelinore — well at least you have admitted some responsibility. So far the material has been generally good, though I would like to see a much-expanded national-scale history and politics of the region. **Law and Order** was an interesting article, and an important addition, though I hate being a slave to tables, preferring to "wing" it on only a basic outline.

Andy Kent: Pelinore. While applauding and admirable idea, may I ask what is the point in giving us little bits every month? How many adventurous explorers will be content with one square and two pubs when there is a whole city waiting there! There's more to recreation than getting drunk and buying swords. And suppose a crime is committed? We had to wait two months to find out what the Law does! A better idea would be to give us brief outlines of larger areas to be filled out later, rather than details of small bits.

Jason Whittaker, Cannock, Staffs: #19 raised the idea of systemless scenarios. Here's one for possible use in Pelinore.

A troupe of actors arrives in the City League, not particularly attracting the party's attention, except for one beautiful, half-elven actress. Her deportment suggests some kind of nobility, and when she takes a liking to an attractive male in the party, you realise you may be on to a good thing. This actress, Jerina, is going through an old con trick that she's tried successfully elsewhere; she marries a wealthy adventurer, then she and the troupe disappear along with most of her husband's property. While Jerina is hinting about marriage and the possible recovery of lost titles and land, two other NPCs arrive in the story. The first is a handsome member of the militia, the other a petty, but respectable member of the bureaucracy — deviously evil. He will attempt to insinuate his way into the party's friendship, and will then start a fight between the militiaman and Jerina's "intended" by hinting at affairs or attempts on her life. The bureaucrat is looking for someone to use to dismiss the meddling militiaman, and finds the adventurers just the right types. When I tried this sub-plot, it made an interesting and devious trap into which the players might fall if they did not keep their wits about them, resulting in them ending up dead, in jail, a lot poorer or any combination of all three.

*This is typical of the kind of letters we have received about Pelinore, and we're very glad that people are finding it useful, no matter how they are actually using it. We've lots of interesting plans for the future, and we hope a lot more of you will write in with ideas like Jason's. The best will be used in the same way as Chris Felton's **Arena** in this issue.*

Lastly, an odd twist. There have been a few complaints over the years about the way Advanced has outresourced the Basic game.

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Back issues are available at £1.00 each, plus 50p P&P per order (UK price only).

* Stocks running low, please order now to avoid disappointment

Well, here's someone with a complaint that seems to signify the very opposite.

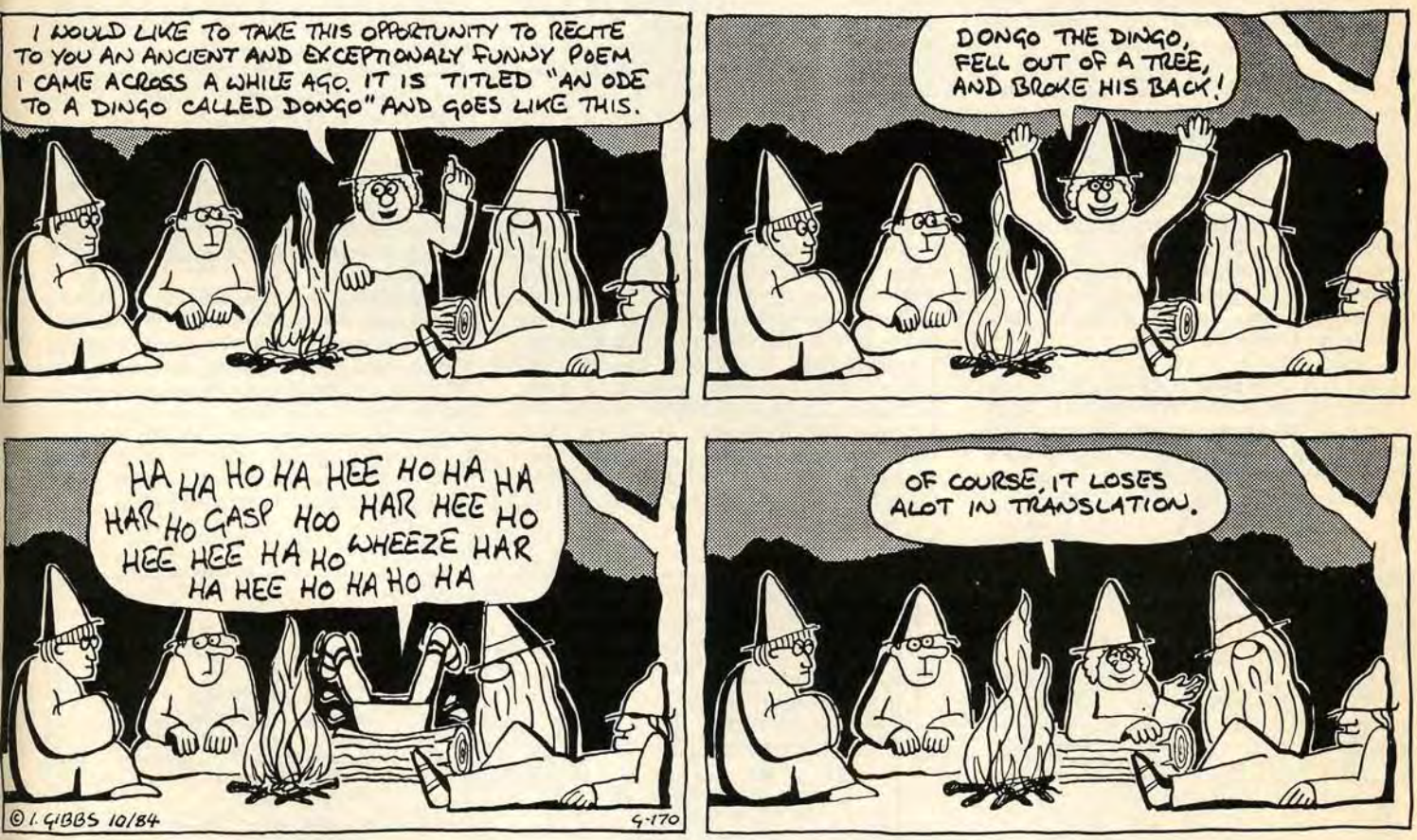
David Stone, Glasgow: As an Advanced player, I'm disappointed that no supplements like the Companion Set have been published for the AD&D® game. With the ***PHB*** and ***DMG*** a character can theoretically work his way up infinite levels, but what does that character do? The fun goes out of gaming when everything except the most powerful beings are push-overs.

As it has been said that Masters and Immortals sets will be published for the Basic game, I feel that the Advanced system is being left out in the cold. Conversion may be possible, but why pay for a product which needs work doing?

We've no firm indication yet about the expansion for Advanced, though there have been rumours about second Players' Handbooks or Japanese/Samurai culture packs. For now, it looks as if it's the D&D® game's turn to run with the ball. If you have ideas for the Advanced system, guess who'd like to hear them.... ***Letters edited by Paul Cockburn***

VOP

by Ian Gibbs


I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO RECITE TO YOU AN ANCIENT AND EXCEPTIONALY FUNNY POEM I CAME ACROSS A WHILE AGO. IT IS TITLED "AN ODE TO A DINGO CALLED DONGO" AND GOES LIKE THIS.
DONGO THE DINGO, FELL OUT OF A TREE, AND BROKE HIS BACK!
HA HA HO HA HEE HO HA HA HAR HO GASP HOO HAR HEE HO HEE HEE HA HO WHEEZE HAR HA HEE HO HA HO HA
OF COURSE, IT LOSES ALOT IN TRANSLATION.
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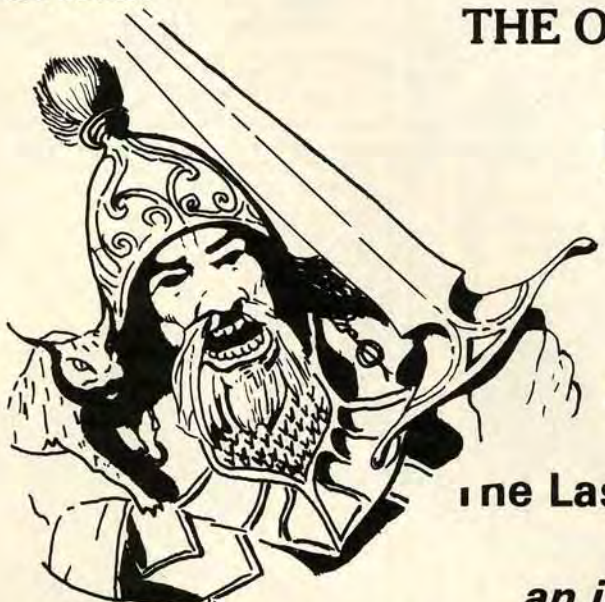
Next Issue



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GAME COMPANY

On this page we will advertise your RPG event or club, or appeal for other gamers in your area, free of charge. Write to IMAGINE, The Mill, Rathmore Rd, Cambridge.

Clubs

Next issue will contain a full listing of all the clubs to have been advertised so far in the *Game Company* column. So if you still haven't found a local group, watch out for any you might have missed in the past!

Starting this month with individuals looking for other roleplayers... Robert Perello of **NORTH LONDON** plays the **D&D®** game but no-one at his sixth form college seems interested. Write to him at 81 Friern Barnet Lane, London N20 if you know of a group he could join.

Russell Jackson is also looking for **D&D** players, this time in **YORK**, to start a new club or who belong to an existing group which he could join. Contact him at Tower House, Landing Lane, Riccall, York YO4 6PW.

A roleplayer in the **RHONDDA** area is looking for fellow players or clubs, and is willing to play **any** rpgs with beginners or experienced players. Please write to Ross Morgan, 40 Wengrieg Road, Trealaw, Rhondda, Mid Glamorgan CF40 2QG.

Next, news of existing clubs looking for new members... **WADURST WARGAMES CLUB** is looking for gamers in the Wadurst area interested in **D&D, AD&D, KNIGHT HAWKS** and **Middle Earth** games as well as wargames. Call Antony Digman on 0892 883786.

ARROWSTORM of PENKRIDGE, STAFFORD play **AD&D, Traveller, RuneQuest, Warhammer** and 'one or two home grown games' on Mondays and Fridays, 7-11pm. If you are 14+ and interested in joining, ring Rob on 078 571 5230 after 6pm for more details.

THE SURREY ADVENTURELORDS is a new club that has just been formed so that rpgers and wargamers can meet others interested in their hobby. The group intends to meet once a month but was still looking for a venue in October — for the latest information contact Paul Wedell (Chairman), 127 Chaldon Way, Coulsdon, Surrey CR3 1DN.

Events

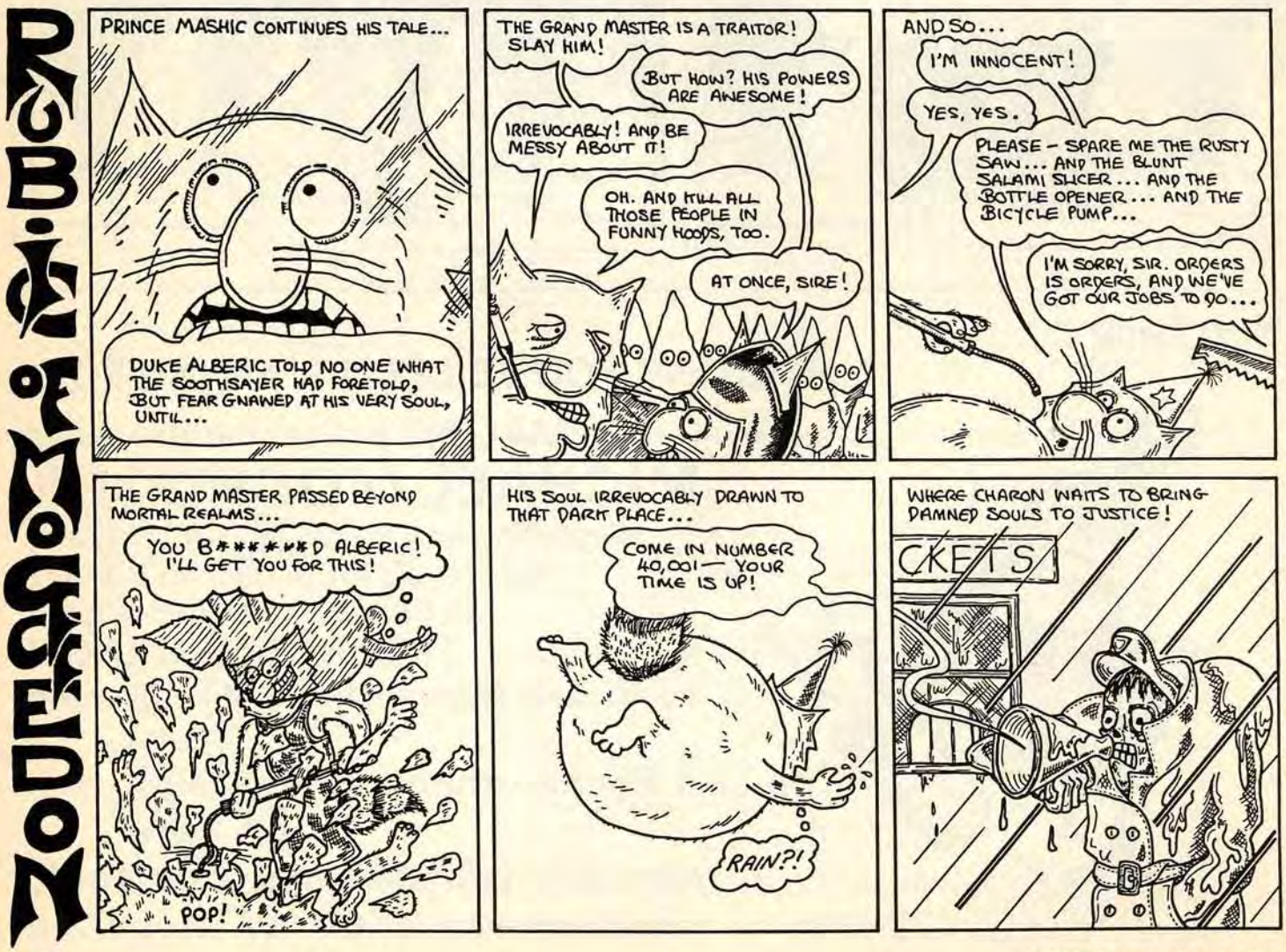
If you didn't realise roleplayers and comics fans had something in common, you now know better! News this month of two **Comic Marts**, where you can buy Marvel, DC, Doctor Who, 2000 AD and other science fiction, fantasy and film related magazines, etc. First, on **Saturday 1st December** in Bluecoat Concert Hall, School Lane, Liverpool. 11am to 3.30pm, Admission 30p. There's another the following **Saturday 8th December**, at Central Hall, Westminster (well known to Dragonmeet attendees!). For more information send SSAE to Titan Distributors, PO Box 250, London E3.

Exeter University Games Society's Annual Convention takes place on the weekend of **26-27 January**, starting at 11am on Saturday. 'Facilities will be provided for FRPG players of most kinds, and wargamers.' The organisers also hope to hold an AD&D competition. Contact B R Hooper, Kilmorie, Pennsylvania Road, Exeter, Devon for full details.

Yorcon will take place **5-8 April** in the Dragonara and Queens hotels, Leeds. Guest of Honour will be author Gregory Benford, whose novel *Against Infinity* was reviewed in IMAGINE magazine (HB #7, PB #20). Enquiries to Christine Donaldson, 46 Colwyn Road, Beeston, Leeds LS11 6PY.

Next year's **Eurocon** takes place in Eindhoven on **12-14 April**. There will be frp and wargames, Diplomacy championship etc. For full details contact Jan Feringa, Radijsstraat 11B, 9741 BJ Broningen, Netherlands.

Finally this month, news of **Sol III 85**, which will be from **3rd to 6th May** at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool. Confirmed guests include Mark Lenard (Sarek) and SF authors James White and Lisa Tuttle. Main programme includes guest talks, films, fancy dress and a disco. Fee £15 for weekend. Registration forms and further details available from 39 Dersingham Avenue, Manor Park, London E12. Please enclose a SSAE.


PRINCE MASHIC CONTINUES HIS TALE...
DUKE ALBERIC TOLD NO ONE WHAT THE SOOTHSAYER HAD FORETOLD, BUT FEAR GNAWED AT HIS VERY SOUL, UNTIL...
THE GRAND MASTER IS A TRAITOR! SLAY HIM!
BUT HOW? HIS POWERS ARE AWESOME!
IRREVOCABLY! AND BE MESSY ABOUT IT!
OH. AND KILL ALL THOSE PEOPLE IN FUNNY HOODS, TOO.
AT ONCE, SIRE!
AND SO...
I'M INNOCENT!
YES, YES.
PLEASE - SPARE ME THE RUSTY SAW... AND THE BLUNT SALAMI SLICER... AND THE BOTTLE OPENER... AND THE BICYCLE PUMP...
I'M SORRY, SIR. ORDERS IS ORDERS, AND WE'VE GOT OUR JOBS TO DO...
THE GRAND MASTER PASSED BEYOND MORTAL REALMS...
YOU B******D ALBERIC! I'LL GET YOU FOR THIS!
POP!
HIS SOUL IRREVOCABLY DRAWN TO THAT DARK PLACE...
COME IN NUMBER 40,001 — YOUR TIME IS UP!
RAIN?!
WHERE CHARON WAITS TO BRING DAMNED SOULS TO JUSTICE!
TICKETS

THE PHALANX

by R. Grenville Evans

CHUNK the FIFTH: THE CRAB

THE VALLEY OF THE ABOVEMENTIONED POSES A SERIES OF VEXING RIDDLES AND SCARIFYING EVENTS FOR OGRYN THE BIG AND WEASEL THE FAIRLY-CLEVER, WITH THE PROMISE OF MORE TO COME, IF THEY TARRY THERE. NOW POOR, FOOLISH OGRYN THINKS HE HAS MET A MERMAID.....

O, WEASEL, SHE'S BEAUTIFUL, AND I'M GOING TO BE ENAMOURED WITH HER, AS THE LEGEND SAYS, AND EVENTUALLY GO COMPLETELY BARMY!

THIS IS NO MERMAID YOU BIG CLAY-HEAD ...IT'S MOURLA!

YES, OGRYN - IT'S ME! I MUST SPEAK WITH YOU BOTH...

THERE, OLD OG'S OFFERED HIS CLOAK. ISN'T HE A GOOD LAD!

THANK YOU

WE WON'T LOOK

WHAT IS IT YOU WANT TO TELL US, MOURLA? AND WHY WEREN'T YOU AT THE FEAST YESTERDAY?

MANY THINGS ARE NOT CLEAR TO US... BUT WE KNOW OF YOUR PLIGHT AFTER THE FEAST WAS OVER... AND OF THE SWORD

WE KNOW THAT YOU ENTERED THE CASTLE OF OTHRUNU.. AND WE KNOW THAT THE MILLER'S SON HAS BEEN TAKEN...

"WE"? EXPLAIN...

THE SECRET OF THE VALLEY OF THE PHALANX LIES IN THE CASTLE... AND THE HOLY ORDER LED BY THE LORD BANSHURGA!

WHAT IS THE PHALANX? NOTHING TO DO WITH FINGERS..? NO, OF COURSE...

MOURLA... THAT'S YOUR DRAGON, ISN'T IT...?

EDGOR! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

HE'S PINCHING MY CLOAK! MY GRANDAD GAVE ME THAT!

WEASEL PURSUES THE SCALY THIEF

HURPH... HURPH... IF YOU THINK I HAVE NOTHING BETTER TO DO THAN CHASE JEALOUS DRAGONS ACROSS ROCKS TO RETRIEVE... OH, NO, HE'S **DROPPED** IT!!

HALLO! DID YOU CATCH HIM?

NO. LOOK WHERE HE'S PUT IT!

I'M SO SORRY, WEASEL... EDGOR'S BEHAVING VERY STRANGELY

WEAS, WHY NOT LEAVE IT? Y'GRANDAD'S BEEN DEAD FOR YEARS, HE WON'T KNOW

IT'S NOT WHAT HE KNOWS! THAT KEEPS A LOT OF NASTY WEE DRAUGHTS OUT. I'M GOING TO GET IT.

AS THEY WATCH HIM ON HIS DIFFICULT DESCENT, MOURLA GROWS MORE PENSIVE: AND THEN...

HE'S DISAPPEARED! OH, WAIT, THERE'S HIS BONCE, HE'S ALL RIGHT.

OGRYN... SOMETHING HAS JUST BECOME CLEAR... EDGOR LED US HERE DELIBERATELY .... I KNOW THIS PLACE...

LOOK, MOURLA... HE'S GOT IT. BUT HE'S FOUND SOMETHING ELSE...

CALL HIM BACK! CALL HIM BACK!!

WEE-EASS!

I KNOW I JUST HEARD SOME-ONE TALKING IN THIS CAVE...

IS MY FORTHCOMING FEAST OF FLESH, BONE AND SILVER TAIL TO BE PRECEDED BY THIS UPRIGHT ENTITY WHO LOITERS ENQUIRINGLY BY THE MOUTH OF MY CAVE?
I SAY YES! WHAT A PRETTY FELLOW TO WHET MY APPETITE! NOT ONE BIT OF YOU WILL BE WASTED, OH NO! I WILL EVEN DEVOUR YOUR BONES AND HAIR!!
I'M NOT PRETTY, I'M UGLY! EAUGH!!
OH, QUICKLY, OGRYN! HE'S IN THE CRABS LAIR! THE CRAB WILL KILL WEASEL! HE GUARDS THE SECRET ENTRANCE TO THE CASTLE, AND CAPTURES THE MERMAIDS FOR... FOR....
FOR WHAT, OR WHO, I DON'T CARE, I MUST SAVE MY FRIEND—WHY DIDN'T YOU SPEAK UP BEFORE HE WENT?
I FORGET...
NEVER MIND— STAY BACK, WHILE... -BY MY AUNT EBA'S BEARD! WHAT IS....
TWO DINNERS! AH, AND MOURLA, WHO WOULD BE DESSERT, WERE I PERMITTED! BUT I THANK YOU!
I'LL DO FOR YOU...
INDEED, IT IS VERY WELL YOU WILL DO FOR ME! MY LORD BASHURGA FEEDS HIS CRAB ON TOO FEW SLENDER SEA-FILLIES—HE'LL NEVER KNOW THAT I FILCHED FROM HIS PANTRY!
WEAS! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MY LITTLE MATE, WEAS??
TDNCHK
BANSHURGA... BANSHURGA'S PANTRY... NO! THIS WILL NOT BE!!
GDARGH! MOURLA, YOU ARE A FOOL, YOU... UHHK
WE'LL HAVE TO ENTER THE CASTLE - THE CRAB IS BLOCKING THE OTHER EXIT. I WILL TRY TO EXPLAIN WHAT IS HAPPENING. YOU SEE....
I'M NO GOOD AT LISTENING, -TELL WEASEL. C'MON, DON'T DRAG YOUR FEET, WEAS. WEAS? WEASEL!
MOURLA! HE'S DEAD! MY LITTLE MATE, WEAS IS DEAD!!
SHUT YOUR HEAD, OGRYN. I'VE JUST GONE A BIT FRAGILE AROUND THE KNEECAPS. C'MON, HOLD ME UP, I'M SLIPPING...
THANK YOU VERY MUCH, WEASEL!
BE QUIET! WE ARE IN THE DOMAIN OF THE MYSTIC, OTHRUNJ... AND THE FACT THAT I KNOW THIS, PROVES THAT THINGS ARE GOING VERY WRONG!
MOURLA CONTINUES TO SPEAK IN RIDDLES, AND IT LOOKS LIKE THE BOYS WILL BE LATE FOR THEIR BANQUET, THE CONSEQUENCES OF WHICH COULD UNSETTLE A LOT OF STRANGE PEOPLE....

IMAGINE™ magazine

READERS SURVEY

While you're relaxing after the Xmas dinner, sleepily surveying the ten pairs of socks, two (identical) rpgs and the Wham! album, it might strike you that something very important is missing, something worth all these things together... Yes, the object you wanted most was your own **IMAGINE reader** badge.

Well, do not despair. This calamity can be remedied if you fill in this form and send it to The Mill by January 8th. Everyone who submits a completed survey form by that date will receive one of these prized — er, prizes. And as a small additional bonus, the first three forms plucked out of the Editor's tammie on that day will also win a MARVEL SUPERHEROES™ game.

So, take a closer look at the form below. Horrible, isn't it? In fact, it's quite easy to fill in. On the left, we have attempted to categorize all the different types of article we've published so far, giving a recent example where relevant. Then there are three columns. If you like reading that kind of article in IMAGINE magazine, then tick the first box; if you don't enjoy reading articles of that type, tick the second. Lastly, where appropriate, tell us the name of the article of that type you liked the most, and attach any comments you may have. Only tick the 'like' or 'dislike' box where you have a strong opinion about that kind of article — otherwise leave it blank.

Finally, post your form or a photocopy of it to us here at IMAGINE magazine (Readers' Survey), The Mill, Rathmore Road, Cambridge CB1 4AD. All entries must arrive here by January 8th, 1985 to qualify for the Draw — you wouldn't want to miss out on those prizes just for being late, now would you?

Oh, yes — don't forget to fill in your name and address...

.....

.....

ARTICLE TYPE:	*LIKE*	*DISLIKE*	*FAVOURITE / COMMENTS*
Scenarios (D&D) Sinvel's Peril			
Scenarios (AD&D) Necklace of Lilith			
Scenarios (SF) Amber Zone			
Scenarios (other systems) Darklaw			
Scenarios (multi-system) Sethotep			
Brief Encounters (new gaming 'hardware') The Marsh Dragon			
Rules expansion articles Looking for an Edge			
Discursive gaming articles Clerics Are People Too			
Historical/background articles Magic & Mayhem			
General Articles Roleplaying for Remedials			
Pelinore			
Stirge Corner			
Chain Mail			
Illuminations			
Notices (reviews)			
Press Cuttings (fanzines)			
Media Reviews			
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Oh, and what about these old features, which don't appear in the magazine any more...			
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Beginners' Guide			
Imagination Machine (micro-computers)			

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